

NAVARRE
OF THE NORTH

BOOKS BY
ESTHER BIRDSALL DARLING

The Break-Up
Baldy of Nome
Navarre of the North
Luck of the Trail

YOUNG MODERNS BOOKS

NAVARRE OF THE NORTH

*A thrilling story of the grandson
of Baldy of Nome*

BY
ESTHER BIRDSALL DARLING



Junior Books

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TO MY SISTER
JANE BIRDSALL KIESEL
AND MY BROTHER
ERNEST STRATTON BIRDSALL

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NAVARRE
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CHAPTER ONE

PAUL ACQUIRES A DOG

"TAKE that, you brute, and that!"

There was a grating, metallic sound, and then a snarl that had in it rage and a note of pain.

Paul Barrau turned the corner of the street quickly to see a gaunt wolf-dog backed against the wall of a cabin; and facing him a man with a stout chain in his hand. The chain was stained with blood, and clinging to it were tufts of matted hair.

The man, scowling, glanced at Paul and back at the dog, whose ruff bristled suggestively and whose fangs were bared.

"You *will* steal, will you?" The slouching figure advanced a step or two and raised the chain, the dog continuing to growl.

"What's the trouble, Mart?"

Mart Barclay—Black Mart he was called in Nome from his swarthy skin and heavy dark brows that met over small, furtive eyes—answered gruffly.

“Trouble enough. I’ve been missing grub from my cache for the last three days—dried salmon I keep in there for my team. And now”—he made a gesture toward the culprit—“I’ve caught him in the act.” A half-eaten fish was lying in the snow as proof of the crime.

Paul felt sorry for the dog and tried, in spite of the evidence, to establish an alibi. “Wasn’t the door shut? How could he get in?”

“Yes, shut all right, and locked. But these here huskies kin find some way o’ gittin’ what they want outen a shed, locked or not. Loose board or a hole they make bigger with their tusks.” He pointed with grudging respect to the strong white teeth that showed between the drawn lips.

“He looks terribly hungry, Mart. And when they’re like that they just have to have food, no matter how they get it. And you know you can’t get any place by beating a starving dog.”

“Oh, I can’t, can’t I? Well, you’ll see what I kin do before I finish with him. He’ll be a better dog or a dead one, and I don’t care much which.”

Paul’s anger rose as he saw the cruelty in Mart’s face, but he curbed the desire to say what he thought. The man’s temper was beyond words or reason. Instead he remarked quietly, “I’ve never seen him before. Do you know who owns him?”

"Nobody now; he did belong to Sam Milton of Teller," Mart answered sullenly. "Sam was brought down to the hospital here and died of pneumony last week. Jim Stanton, who lives across Snake River, next t' the cemetery, was passin' a while ago, and he told me the dog ain't budged from Sam's grave since the fun'ral, 'cept when he leaves t' steal. He wouldn't let Jim near him, or he'd got fed proper, the ornery beast."

"Poor fellow!" Paul's voice was full of sympathy.

"If he had a decent disposition," Mart continued, "I'd keep him t' drive; but I don't aim t' have any Bolsheviks, or what's their names, in no team o' mine."

There flashed through Paul's mind the picture of Black Mart's team: overworked, underfed, and cowed; and a protective instinct stirred within him toward the desperate creature held at bay by Mart and his chain.

Paul was not afraid of dogs, even those that were considered vicious. Such experts as Leonard Seppala, Ed Rohn, and Duffy O'Connor agreed that he "had a way" with them, which seemed to cover a subtle influence they did not attempt to explain.

He moved over to the husky, whose eyes glared for an instant into his own; then, with a whimper that punishment had not brought, the dog licked the friendly hand that was stretched out to him.

"If he doesn't belong to anyone now," Paul said slowly, "I'll take him home with me. My mother 'll

let me keep him." He smiled as he spoke of his mother. "She always lets me feed cats and dogs till they're claimed, and if there's no one . . ." He did not finish, but, nodding curtly to Barclay, caught hold of the collar, a thin strip of leather almost lost in the thick hair of the dog's throat.

Mart stepped toward them. "Keep your hands off that there dog. He's no good, and I'm goin' to have the marshal shoot him. Think you'll take him home to be mamma's pretty Fido, do you? Well, you got another think comin', you little buttinsky, you son of a high-toned, frog-eatin' Frenchy."

Paul's hands clenched at the allusion to his French father, whose memory he cherished as something too sacred to be mentioned in Mart's presence. "I wouldn't go to the marshal about him, if I were you. He might ask questions about the coal that they've been missing from the Sesnon Company's piles, 'stead of what you think about a stray dog. They say Marshal Jordan's spotted all the men in Nome whose dogs are abused, too." Paul, in his indignation, could not resist these thrusts at Black Mart's reputation for taking what did not belong to him and driving dogs he had whipped into unwilling service.

Barclay was not anxious to have an interview with the marshal on any subject whatever; so, passing over the allusions, he muttered resentfully, "If you're goin', you better go while the goin's good, or you'll git the hidin' you deserve—you an' that devil with you. He's more wolf than dog. Stanton says Sam

Milton even named him Gray Wolf, and you'll find you can't trust that breed any more'n you kin folks that's mongrel. Bad blood, and mark my words, you'll find it out sooner or later."

With deliberate intention Paul fired a parting shot: "Well, Mart, I guess nobody in Nome 'd say you're any judge of good blood in men, or dogs either. And I'll bet that some day his wolf blood'll be something to brag about. Come on, pup."

Ignoring Barclay, who went into the house cursing, Paul walked rapidly down the road, the dog limping beside him.

When they had gone a short distance the boy stopped to look the dog over. The chain had slashed the flesh in several places, through the silver-gray coat; on his nose was a broad welt from a blow, and blood came in a steady stream from a deep cut on one flank. While he winced as Paul passed his hand over the hurt body, the dog offered no resistance to the examination.

"You're all right"—Paul gave him a reassuring pat—"and Mother 'll fix you up like she does me when I bark my shins. We'll forget that little run-in we had with Mart. He's not worth getting mad about." Yet there rose to his own brown cheeks a flush as he recalled the words, "little buttinsky," "son of a high-toned, frog-eatin' Frenchy." There were some things one couldn't forget. "Anyway, don't remember what he's done to you till you're in better scrapping shape."

"Hello, Paul." Three boys came up behind him; fellow members of the Ancient and Honorable Order of Bow-Wow Wonder Workers, a dog men's association, as Paul had proudly told his mother, into which he had recently been admitted. Dan Kelly, Ted Wilson, and Gene Terry paused to exchange the fraternal greetings and grips that were a part of the elaborate ritual of the order. They regarded Paul's companion with interest.

"Yours?" There was a hint of disapproval in Dan's tone. As president of the Wonder Workers, and as a driver who had been a winner in a juvenile race, his question carried weight.

One of the rules of the organization was that each member must, within six months of initiation, own at least one dog, or preferably more. If he could prove this to be impossible, owing to foolish but firm objections by parents, he must bear so excellent a reputation that he could borrow a team to enter any race for which he should be eligible. Paul had been admitted because Matt Lawson, who took care of the Allan and Darling Sweepstakes Racers, said he was a "natural born musher." And what Matt said went in dog circles in Nome without protest.

"Yours?" Dan repeated, a grin spreading over his amiable face. "Start of your kennel, maybe? Some start, I'll tell the world!"

"I guess he's mine; no one else seems to want him," Paul replied seriously.

The boys laughed. "I'll say no one else would." Gene squinted at the dog critically. "Bag o' bones, that's what he is; and looks like he'd been through a sausage machine, besides."

Dan Kelly, however, who was known to possess more "deep dog dope" than anyone in the gang, was not to be misled by mere appearances.

"He may be a bag o' bones, Gene, and look like mincemeat, but Baldy of Nome wasn't so much when he was young; and they say that Tom, Dick, and Harry, of the Allan and Darling team, were the mangiest pups on all Seward Peninsula. And," impressively, "they've been in every single Sweepstakes so far, and never out of the money."

"That's so," from Gene.

"Then," Dan continued, "take the Darlings' Yellow Peril. I'll bet he could get into a bathing beauty show with looks, and he's a regular false alarm. He don't want to do a thing but go to the movies with his family or to a party and get a piece of cake from some woman," scornfully. "So you see looks don't mean such an awful lot. This one," with a condescending wave toward the husky, "may have the guts, as Matt calls it, and that's what counts in folks and dogs."

As the boys walked on with Paul he went over his experience with Mart Barclay, the recital lasting till he reached his home, a neatly painted brown cabin on the edge of the town.

"Well, here's luck, Paul, hoping your mother'll see how terrible important it is for you to have a dog. You better explain that our order's no she-club, where all the members just doll up and talk about each other and drink tea. Tell her the Wonder Workers got traditions o' the North to uphold; and you just have to have dogs to uphold 'em with." Ted Wilson had delivered himself of this quotation from a recent conversation, quite innocent of the fact that there had been a twinkle in his father's eyes when he had said, "Yes, Son, you may join the Bow-Wow Wonder Workers, but don't forget it means that you'll have the best traditions of the North to uphold."

The boys were much impressed with these obligations, and often in their meetings hot dogs became cold, and ice cream melted, while they threshed out problems that confronted them in this connection.

Paul pushed open the gate of the picket fence that surrounded the house and watched the others as they continued on their way to the tundra: a snow-covered plain that stretched back to the low-lying hills in the distance.

He went very soberly up the path. After all, *would* his mother be willing to let him have the dog? It would be another mouth to feed, and things had not been going very well with them lately.

He bent and felt the husky's ribs. They were close to the hair, with but little flesh between. Well, she'd never failed him yet; so with renewed confidence he

quicken his steps and opened the door, leading his unwilling companion inside.

It was chilly and almost dusk, for the late fall days are short; but the fire burning in a big stove made the place warm and comfortable.

Paul thought their living room the prettiest in Nome, with its bright hangings, cheerful rugs, and a wide couch under the window, covered with a lynx robe. Just the spot for a fellow to curl up and read, or dream of all the things he wants to do; and can do, if he makes up his mind and sticks to the job hard enough.

He'd made up his mind now to keep the dog and was considering the best way to break the fact to his mother when she entered from the kitchen.

She was an attractive woman, still young, with a soft voice and a gentle manner. Paul was proud of her; but in spite of what he had told Mart Barclay of her hospitality to transient dog and cat guests, he was not quite sure just how she would feel toward a permanent addition to the family circle.

Every cent of income she made by giving lessons in French was being saved to develop the mine that his father had owned. And it would take a lot of salmon and white whale meat to cover these bones.

"Mother, I've brought a friend home to dinner." He pushed the dog into the lighted space about the stove.

Mrs. Barrau, surprised, stepped back involuntarily. "He looks like a timber wolf. Is he savage?"

"No, he's scared, and it makes him look wild." Then, before she could utter any objections, he went again into the details of his encounter with Mart.

"Mother," he saved his trump card for the last, "he called me the son of a frog-eating Frenchy, and I couldn't stand for it. After that I'd have taken the dog away from him if I'd had to punch in his face. He's no fighter, or I might have been afraid. But he's a darned coward, and I could have knocked him down if I'd had to—easy."

Mrs. Barrau's usual objection to fighting was not mentioned. She could get the boy's point of view and share the indignation he felt toward Mart. She had lived too long in that hard country not to realize that it is sometimes necessary to consider self-respect and self-protection as stronger virtues than a peaceful acceptance of insult.

She leaned over to caress the dog, who trembled at the touch. He was not used to women, and she represented some new, mysterious terror to his confused senses.

"You'd better feed him at once," Mrs. Barrau said, as she began to set the table. "You'll find a pan of corn-meal mush and some scraps on the sink. I was saving them for my friend Rex, next door. I don't know how I'll be able to explain to him that he can't expect anything from me this evening. He'll be disappointed."

"He doesn't need it, Mother. He's too well fed at home. Fat as a seal. But this poor fellow . . ." Paul

picked up the pan and went out into the back yard where, in the shelter of a snowdrift, he watched the dog eat ravenously. Satisfied at last, and wagging his plummy tail in gratitude, Wolf followed Paul into the house and lay by him quietly during dinner.

When the table was cleared and the dishes washed, Paul settled himself on the couch under the reading lamp, the dog still crouching at his feet.

"History to-night?" Mrs. Barrau inquired.

"Yes, and algebra. I wish I didn't have to take math—it's so hard for me."

"We all have to get used to hard things in life, so you mustn't let mathematics down you."

"But people are so much more interesting than figures. In my French history I'm just where Henry of Navarre put up such a peach of a scrap against the Spaniards. Gosh, but I'm glad that one of Father's ancestors fought with him. I can just see them riding out on their prancing horses behind the King, with his shining helmet and white feathers flying. It must have been great."

Mrs. Barrau sighed. "Fighting isn't all glory. Your grandfather lost two of his brothers in the Franco-Prussian War and was crippled himself. And your hero, Henry of Navarre, was loved best in France because he tried to make living conditions easier for his people and was not merely a successful soldier. Don't forget that, when you're thinking of shining helmets and waving plumes."

"Anyway, I bet I could get nerved up to doing

something that took courage if there were flags and bands and cheers."

"Courage, the true kind, doesn't come from the outside. It's *in* you."

"Yes, I know. But outside things *do* help, with folks and even with dogs. Do you remember the Allan and Darling red setter, Irish, in the last High School Race?"

"Yes, it was the most spectacular finish I ever saw."

"Well, he'd about lost—was all in. But when he heard the yells of the crowd that had cheered him to his victories in the Sweepstakes he knew what they were expecting. 'Come on, Irish!' 'Just once more, Irish!' And how he did pace those last few yards, his gray muzzle in the air, and his tail waving. The young dogs behind him were panting to beat the band, when he took that leap across the line. He was dead tired; and when I saw him lean against Matt Lawson, who'd always taken care of him, sort of asking Matt if he was satisfied, I sniveled. Couldn't help it."

"I don't wonder. I did, too."

"And Dan Kelly, who was second, hopped off his sled and almost busted out crying, the dog was so game. He shook paws with Irish and said right out before the mob, 'I thought you were a *has-been*, but you're the best *are* I ever met, and I'm darned glad you licked me in the last race you'll ever run. You're leaving Alaska with *some record*!' And I'd bet it was the cheers that did it. He just couldn't disappoint his friends."

"He certainly had a magnificent record, and I'm glad he's living in California now, in the ease and luxury he deserves. But how about that algebra, Paul?"

The boy plunged into his lessons with renewed energy. At the end of an hour he gave a sigh of relief. "I've done all of the problems, Mother, and they were mighty tough ones."

"Then I'll tell you some good news, as a reward." She walked over to her desk and picked up a letter. "The Kougarok mail came in to-day, and Moose Jones writes that he's coming to Nome for a couple of months. Things are quiet at the claim, and he has to buy more machinery." She glanced at the date. "As the mail only comes down once a week, and this was posted several days ago, he may possibly be here to-morrow."

"I'll say it's good news. Let's get his cabin fixed up for him in the morning. Saturday, and no school. Won't it be great to have him?"

"Yes, it will." Mrs. Barrau was genuinely fond of Edward Jones, the rough but kindly miner who had befriended her husband and herself, when young and inexperienced, they had come to Nome in the gold rush of 1900, with their baby and but little money. Jones had been on the same boat with them from Seattle, and had constituted himself a gentle, if awkward, nurse for little Paul when she and Gaston Barrau had both been ill during the entire voyage.

Then had come the stress and confusion of the arrival of thousands of stampedeers. The beach at Nome

and the ground just back of it were filled with flimsy buildings and tents hastily erected for the men and women who had answered that first cry of "Gold!" hoping to make their fortunes at once and return to spend them in a gentler land.

In those troubled times Jones had proved himself a rock of sound sense and a sincere friend, giving not only advice, but practical help.

"These folks ain't all goin' t' stay," he had said; "just come aimin' t' pick up nuggets in the streets an' go back loaded down with 'em in a month or so. But minin' ain't like that. I bin too long in Alaska an' on the Yukon—trail of '98 an' Dawson—t' git took in by sich fairy tales. Minin's hard work, plus some luck, an' them as sticks is the ones that's goin' t' win out."

He had expressed his opinion forcibly of the men who were expecting easy money. "Look at that there sissy with his hair parted in the middle," he had sniffed scornfully to Helen and Gaston Barrau as they had stood with him on the deck of the *Ohio* and a dapper youth passed. The boy's face was weak, and his body thin and stooped. "I reckon he never done nothin' harder 'n sell a yard o' ribbon or a hank o' lace in his hull life; ner nothin' more excitin' 'n takin' his gal buggy ridin' t' the village graveyard on a Sunday."

Gaston Barrau had laughed rather ruefully as he extended his own slender hands. "Perhaps you think I'm in the same class, Ed. I've been in an office in the

French bank in San Francisco ever since I left my home in France four years ago. No outside work at all."

"No, you'll git over white hands, but not a white liver; an' this purty little wife o' yourn ain't the daughter of a Californy pioneer fer nothin'. You got good red blood, an' I'll gamble on both o' you t' win out."

Helen Barrau roused herself from these memories as the clock struck half-past ten.

"Bedtime, dear."

The book on Paul's lap fell to the floor with a thud, as he moved reluctantly to his feet.

Wolf, nervously alert, rose instantly and stood with his nose pressed close against the boy's knees. Any sudden sound might mean a new danger, and he was not to be taken unawares. He had found a protector, and he determined to stay by him.

Paul thought it a good opportunity to reopen the question of the dog.

"May he stay with us, Mother? Just see how much he likes me already. He's young and strong, and he'll make a bully sled dog; maybe a leader. And you know it's my duty as a Bow-Wow Wonder Worker to own a team." Then, impressively, "If we don't keep him, Mart Barclay might get busy and have him killed."

The husky's steady gaze was fixed with pathetic trust on her son's face; and a lump came in Mrs. Barrau's throat at the sight of the matted blood on

the gray coat and the deep gash on the flank—the result of Black Mart’s cruelty. A boy and a dog—by right of tradition they belonged together, her husband had always said. “Yes,” she answered thoughtfully, “he’s yours. We’ll manage some way.”

Paul threw his arms about his mother’s neck and kissed her impetuously. “I knew you’d say it. You’re the best mother in the whole world. To-morrow I’ll build him a house; but—” he hesitated—“what’ll we do with him to-night? If I let him out now he’ll go back to Sam Milton’s grave. And it’s so cold.”

“You may take him in your room to-night. He’ll grow used to the place and to us, soon. All he needs, evidently, is a little patience and kindness and——”

There was a sound of bells, and a chorus of sharp barks in the road. Then a hearty voice boomed out in the clear, frosty air.

“There’s a light, so they ain’t gone t’ bed yet. So long, Taylor. See you afore you start back t’ the Kougarok. Much obleeged fer the lift.”

“Moose!” Paul exclaimed, as he dashed eagerly toward the door, followed by his mother. Wolf retreated into a shadowy corner, where he crouched motionless, his eyes gleaming like burning embers.

Moose Jones greeted Mrs. Barrau cordially and came into the middle of the room, his hand on Paul’s shoulder. Under the reading lamp that hung over a center table he regarded the boy carefully.

“You sure hev shot up in the last six months, Son.

More like your dad than ever: jest as wiry, but taller. Better go slow, or you'll be ez big ez me, some day, an' folks 'll call you Moose the second."

"That won't hurt my feelings," Paul laughed.

Moose turned to Mrs. Barrau. "Thought I'd drop in an' git the key t' my shack." His small cabin was built in the rear of the Barrau lot, and they cared for it during his absence.

"No, it's damp there. One of the windows is broken, and snow has drifted in. We were planning to put it in order for you to-morrow; but to-night I'll make up a bed for you here on the couch, where you can be comfortable."

"O. K. with me, if it don't put you out none." Moose was removing his fur parka when Paul exclaimed excitedly, "I've got a surprise for you. Guess what it is."

"A prize fer 'rithmetic," Moose chuckled; for Paul had always confided to him his school difficulties, as well as all of the little troubles of everyday affairs.

"Something better'n that"; and the boy led Wolf toward Moose, who stared in amazement at the gaunt creature with the crimson stains on his side.

"Well, I'll be blowed. Where'd you git your little playmate? He looks like he oughta be in the emergency ward at the Holy Cross Horspital."

The dog was clearly averse to meeting a stranger. He had met too many in his recent checkered career not to be suspicious of their intentions.

At a word from Paul he stood trembling, but obe-

dient, while Moose observed him critically, turning his face toward the light.

For the third time Paul told the story of the episode with Barclay, not omitting Mart's insulting allusions to his father. He knew they would cause indignation; for Moose Jones still treasured the memory of the friendship between Gaston Barrau and himself, that only death had ended.

"He said that, did he, the cur? Well, I'll make him eat them words some day, sure fire."

Mrs. Barrau hastily interrupted: "Moose must be tired, Paul, and it's long past your bedtime."

As Paul started for his room he paused. "What do you really think of him, Moose? Mart says he's no good—too much wolf blood—that he'll be treacherous."

"Come here, pup." At the sound of the firm but kindly tone Wolf went willingly, this time, to Jones. The man, stooping, passed his strong hands over the thin body, noting the breadth of the chest, the sinewy legs, the width between the intelligent eyes. Then he straightened up. "Sam Milton o' Teller owned him, you say? Well, I know the litter. Was there with Sam when they was only a few days old; an' I kin tell you, kid, there ain't no better sled-dog blood in the North. His grandfather was Dubby, straight McKenzie River husky; come down the Yukon with Scotty Allan from Dawson. 'King o' the Trail,' they call him hereabouts. *Some dog*. And his mother," Moose added slowly, as if to give impressiveness to an important

announcement, "well, his mother wuz a daughter o' Baldy o' Nome. Blood! Why, this here purp could range right 'longside o' King George of England and bark, 'Shake, King. You got nothin' on me, when it comes t' bein' royal.'"

Paul's heart beat happily. He'd have great things to tell the Wonder Workers in the morning. He said good-night and closed his door. Then he knelt on the floor beside Wolf, pressing his cheek close against the dog's head.

"I just *felt* you were all right. You never lay down, even when Black Mart struck you, and you fought back the best you could. No wonder," he murmured proudly. "It's what all Alaska 'd expect from a grandson of Baldy of Nome."

CHAPTER TWO

NAVARRE, GRANDSON OF BALDY
OF NOME

THE next morning after breakfast Paul went with Moose Jones downtown to buy the materials for the house for Wolf.

The dog did not want the boy out of his sight, and struggled to go with him. But Mrs. Barrau had bandaged the injured leg, so it was decided that he must remain quiet for a while. Moose tied him to a staple on the front porch in the sunshine, arranging an old rug for his comfort. "You ain't in no shape, pup," he said, "fer your deboo inter society. Paul's got a reputation t' make with the Wonder Workers ez a dog man, an' you sure do look like you had a little set-to with a steam shovel."

Wolf threw himself down disconsolately, watching Paul and Moose till they were lost in a turn of the

road. Life, until very recently, had dealt happily with him. From his birth he had been the constant companion of Sam Milton in the town of Teller, up the coast from Nome. Sam had sold the other puppies in the litter at a good price, for their pedigree was a fine one, and they had all given promise of unusual intelligence. This one, however, he had selected to keep as a pet, because of his perfect marking and affectionate disposition. He had never broken the dog to harness, but he sometimes placed light packs on his back: a blanket, frying pan, and a few pounds of flour and bacon, when they had gone into the hills, prospecting.

Wolf had developed an unerring trail instinct, and Sam asserted that there was no losing him, even in the fiercest blizzards. "He's got wolf senses and dog sense," he boasted; "an' if I ever strike it rich enough t' support a crack team, he'll be my leader. I'll bet he'll give his old granddad, Baldy of Nome, the shivers fer fear he'll lose his crown o' glory. Yes, sir; you jest watch this husky o' mine an' you'll git an eyeful."

Wolf was nine months old when Sam had been brought, fatally ill, to the hospital in Nome. He had asked a neighbor to care for the dog, and fasten him in the kennel as long as there was any danger of his following on the trail. The neighbor had done this; but a few hours after Sam's departure a chewed rope and a broken board in the kennel door told of the husky's determination to be with his master.

The man driving the sled in which Milton lay warmly wrapped in furs was obliged to stop frequently at road houses and Eskimo huts, for Sam's strength was ebbing fast.

A few miles before they reached their destination Wolf caught up with them, and Sam roused himself to say, "Good dog. Good sport. Can't git rid o' you, seems like. Don't want to." Then he lapsed into a semiconscious state that lasted till he was under the care of the Sisters at the Holy Cross Hospital. There Wolf had crouched beside the entrance, fed by the nurses, but barely touching what they brought him.

When Dr. Hill had been hurriedly summoned at the last, the dog had gone in behind him to Sam's room. He watched, uneasily, the two or three people who were gathered there, moved silently to the bed, and licked the thin hands that picked at the sheets with restless, futile gestures.

"Look after him—someone," Milton had whispered hoarsely. "He's worth it. He's——"

The strange, awful silence of death, the first lack of response from a beloved friend, fell upon the dog like a blow. He threw back his head and broke into wild, mournful howls. Then, before he could be restrained, he dashed through the hall and into the yard, where he disappeared around the corner of the Eskimo Mission School, as if afraid of pursuit.

For the next twenty-four hours his gaunt gray form was seen, shadowy and illusive, near the hospital grounds. And on the day of the funeral no one had

the heart to remove him from the church, where he lay motionless beside the casket during the simple services.

As he had run by the sled to be near Sam Milton on the trip from Teller, so he walked now by the wagon, drawn by two horses and covered by a black pall, which held all that had been, and was, his whole world. He could not be coaxed to leave the grave, upon which he stretched himself, rigid as if carved in stone, in spite of the thin sleet that was falling in the late November dusk.

The time of his lonely, faithful vigil was broken only by his efforts to secure food, which he brought back with him to the cemetery, savagely resenting all attempts to lure him away.

It was on one of these raids that Mart Barclay had caught him. And for the first time since his loss a heavy, benumbing weight had been lifted from Wolf by the sympathy in Paul Barrau's voice.

When Paul and Moose returned they cleaned up the Jones cabin, and, on the arrival of the lumber, built a spacious house for the newcomer. In the afternoon, when three or four of the Wonder Workers came to ask Paul to go out on the tundra to hunt ptarmigan—the Arctic grouse—he suggested, with a certain satisfaction, that they take the dog. "He's battered up, but he wants to be with me every minute, and we can go slow."

During the walk the boys discussed many weighty matters.

Dan Kelly felt that the Bow-Wow Association should, in the future, be more careful in their election of members. "Of course we can't expect all fellows to be as expert with dogs as us; but last week I saw Tim Neal do something that any good dog man wouldn't *think* of doing. He had his Prince hitched to a single sled and was riding on the runners at the back, going up Steadman Avenue. When they came to the corner of Second Tim wanted to turn to the right and yelled, 'Gee,' six or seven times, and Prince paid no attention to him at all. Then"—disgustingly—"what do you suppose Tim did?"

"Let him go straight ahead, or maybe come 'haw' instead," Gene Terry ventured.

"Worse 'n that. He went into Crowley's Grocery and bought some cookies and *bribed* Prince to 'gee.'"

"Well," Ted Wilson replied, "there's nothing in our rules against that, is there?"

"No," from Dan, "but it isn't sporting; not up to the scratch for a Worker. More like a fool girl trick. Showed that Tim didn't have the guts to stick to his own orders. You wouldn't find a Sweepstakes driver doing it. Ruins discipline."

"You bet it does," Gene asserted. "That's the way my mother acts with my little sister. When Nellie won't mind, Mother near cries and says, 'Darling, it makes me sad when you're so disobedient.' And if Nell kicks and puts up a pretty good yowl it ends by her getting a piece of candy for doing what she's been told."

"That's right," Ted Wilson agreed gloomily. "Same in my family, with my little sister. But I can tell you it's different when we're alone. I just say, 'Look here, kid, you do what I tell you darned quick, or you'll get something from me, and it won't be a chocolate cream.' And you should see her hustle. Yep, I'm all for discipline, like Dan. Girls and pups are 'bout the same, I guess. You can't let 'em get the best of you, or there's no livin' with 'em."

They crossed a bridge over a creek bed and walked along the bank of a frozen stream. Wolf, in spite of his lameness, kept well ahead, and suddenly paused near a clump of willows in an attitude of fixed attention. Then he plunged into the brush and a startled covey of ptarmigan flew out.

The birds, whose feathers are a mottled brown in summer and pure white in winter, were difficult to hit against their background of snow; but Dan, the only one with a gun, fired twice in succession, bringing down two.

Wolf limped after them and retrieved one and then the other.

"It's the first time I ever saw a husky retrieve," Dan exclaimed in surprise. And Paul, feeling that this was the dramatic moment for a disclosure, remarked as casually as bursting satisfaction permitted, "Oh, I s'pose it's partly Sam Milton's training and partly Wolf's blood. Moose Jones told me he's a grandson of Baldy of Nome, and Baldy's from bird-dog stock, you know."

The boys gathered eagerly about Wolf and examined him again carefully, with this news in mind. "His other grandfather's Dubby, the King of the Trail," Paul added, much pleased at the excitement this had created. And, say," with a sudden inspiration, "I'm going to change my dog's name to Navarre. There are too many Wolfs round here, anyway; and after what Black Mart said I don't want any Wolf label tied to him. From now on you fellows remember he's Henry of Navarre; but of course you can call him Navarre, for short."

"Of all the fool names!" Gene Terry remarked disapprovingly. "It's bad enough to have to study about that guy in history, without wishing him on an innocent purp."

"Well, that's who he is, and don't you forget it. Besides, Tim Neal named his dog Prince after the Prince of Wales, and that's some mouthful too, if you say it all."

"Talk about luck," Ted Wilson grumbled. "Why, if any dog got wished onto me in a scrap with Mart, I'll bet I'd have to call him Irish Stew, he'd be such a mixture, 'stead of turning out a top-notch like this."

"Oh, well, I guess being thoroughbred's not so much who you are as what you do," Paul answered with becoming modesty. "I'd have liked Navarre just as well if he was plain dog, and not royalty, as Moose calls him. Though," honestly, "maybe I wouldn't be so proud of him. I sure do get a thrill when I think of Baldy's records."

On the way home Gene, with many qualms, mentioned a fact that his cousin Mollie Day had confided to him. "She said that some of the High School girls were planning to form a society for the promotion of dog racing in their set, and had even considered calling themselves the 'Girl Bow-Wow Wonder Workers.' She wondered if we'd mind," he concluded.

Mind! His companions stood still and voiced their indignation emphatically. "They'd be fine Wonder Workers," from Ted Wilson. "There isn't one single girl who don't wish she could drive with lines, so she wouldn't have to give orders to her leader. And do you think any of 'em would have the courage to yell right out loud the things you just *got* to say sometimes to dogs to make 'em mind? They would *not*!"

"I know," Dan broke in. "I'm all against this girl business. They better," with scathing sarcasm, "call themselves the 'Kit-cat Chit-chat Club' and teach kittens to jump over broomsticks. Dogs? Why, Lida Brown told me yesterday that she thought the Yellow Peril was the best dog in Nome, and when I asked her how she got that way she said it was because he's so cute. Cute! Can you beat it?"

"They're not so dumb about everything," Paul admitted justly. "Most of 'em get higher marks in school than we do."

"Only because they haven't anything more important than studyin' to think about," Dan replied. "But, see here, Gene, if Mollie says anything more about it, you tell her there's nothing doing. No skirt

can be a Wonder Worker, and that goes. They'd want to run the whole shebang, and there'd be one grand mix-up. I guess, with two sisters," he sighed with pained conviction, "there's nothing I don't know about girls."

So the affair was ended unofficially but finally.

Mrs. Barrau had suggested that Moose Jones should have his meals with her and Paul while he remained in town. "I don't want to say anything against your cooking," she remarked smilingly, "but a man living alone is apt to consider a can opener the most important item in his housekeeping and bacon and beans his main diet."

He had agreed to her plan, insisting, however, on paying a liberal sum for his board.

That night after dinner Paul told them of the change in his dog's name. "Sounds pretty high toned," Moose observed, "but then he's a high-toned pup, so I reckon he kin stand fer it. Wouldn't do fer none o' mine. They'd r'ar up on their hind legs an' howl at the mere idee."

They drew their chairs in front of the cheery stove to talk over conditions of their property in the Kougarok, which had been taken up by Gaston Barrau and Moose several years before.

Paul was always included in these business discussions, as he had been in his mother's confidence since the death of her husband; and Moose, too, felt he should be familiar with their problems. "Book larnin' won't do you no harm, but you got to *do* things in this

world, ez well ez *know* 'em, an' a kid can't begin too young to do 'em and do 'em right."

"Our ground's rich enough," Moose began, "but it's goin' t' take time an' money to develop it. We oughta hev some big dumps o' pay dirt when the break-up comes in spring, t' wash the gold out. We'd be on easy street then. But I can't do much alone; we'll hev t' hire some extry men."

"Couldn't I help, Moose?" Paul demanded eagerly. He stretched his arm to full length, and felt of the swelling muscles under his sleeve. "I'm as strong as some men. Not you, of course," with an admiring glance at Jones's big frame, on which there was no superfluous flesh, but which gave the impression of tremendous power.

"What about school, Son? Don't forgit you got t' study a lot o' things I never even heered tell of. Your father said that some day you'd hev t' go back t' France t' visit his relations; an' I reckon from the photygrafts he showed me, an' the fine castle they live in, they're swells. You can't disgrace 'em, Paul, an' let 'em think you didn't pick the right kind of a country to be born in, and the right kind of friends after you was born in it. No, sir. You got t' prove that this here little U. S. A.'s the best place on earth t' hail from."

Paul rose and walked over to the side of the room where, on the wall, hung a water color of an imposing château. Beside it was a miniature on ivory of his grandfather Count Julien de Barrau; an old man with

dark eyes, white hair and beard, dressed in the uniform of the Alpine Chasseurs. On his breast were several decorations. There, too, was a picture of his own father; a snapshot taken shortly before his death and enlarged. Although he was in a flannel shirt, with his trousers tucked in his boots, and a wide felt hat, there was the same dignity and pride in his face as that radiating from the features of the Count.

Gaston de Barrau, a democrat and an adventurer at heart, had dropped the prefix "de" from his name when he settled in San Francisco. "It means nothing here," he told his wife, "and I shall bring up our boy as an American. My uncle Louis will carry on the name in France. All I want is that Paul shall keep the best of the De Barrau traditions—not the worn-out ones—and those of your pioneer father; a good combination. The title doesn't matter."

"But, Moose," Paul turned from the pictures to him, "I won't have to go to France for a long time; maybe never. We'll have three weeks' vacation over the Christmas holidays. Couldn't I go up to the Kougarok then? Perhaps Mother'd go too—and Navarre."

"Mebbe so. It's nearly two months till then. We'll think it over."

The discussion of ways and means was resumed, and Moose outlined his plans for the future. The details were not very interesting to the boy, whose mind wandered to the possibilities that the possession of Navarre opened up to him.

The dog seemed so alert and willing that Paul was sure he could count on him as a fine leader. Now if only he could acquire three or four others, what a team he would have! He'd train them himself and enter the High School Race after the first of the year. Of course, the extra dogs wouldn't be easy to find—good ones—nor to feed if he *did* find them. But, after all, a few days ago he had no prospect of even one, and now he was the owner of a dog of a famous strain; no better in all the North. Most anything *can* happen, he reasoned, if you try for it hard enough.

After several days, when Navarre's wounds were nearly healed, he began to follow Paul to school. This was not uncommon among the dogs of Nome, who were such constant companions of their young masters that they were accustomed either to wait for them in the school yard, playing together in a more or less friendly way, or to leave when their escort duty was over, returning at the closing hour.

At first Navarre had gone into the building at Paul's heels; but the boy had led him out, and he soon knew that it was one of the forbidden things that, however unpleasant, he must accept quietly.

"This is your parking place," Paul announced as he pointed to a sheltered spot beneath the steps; and from then on Navarre held it for his own against any attempts by other dogs to take it from him. While generally amiable, he fiercely resented any interference with what he considered his personal rights.

When the evening for the monthly meeting of the

Wonder Workers arrived, Paul took Navarre with him, in a happy frame of mind. He would now, through his acquisition of Navarre, become an active instead of an associate member of the order. It was a real advance in his ambition to be a factor in this distinguished circle.

The boys gathered in a large, empty room on the lower floor of the Golden Gate Hotel. It was divided from a furnace only by a thin partition, so that it was warm and comfortable.

Jim Schwartzel, the proprietor, had offered the place to them without charge; and while it was infested with cats and kittens of all sizes and colors, it was tolerantly suggested that this might be as a protection against rats and mice and not a lack of taste and judgment on the part of Jim. He was rated a "bully good sport" and the Workers believed he must have a satisfactory reason for supporting in luxury this trivial type of live stock, instead of maintaining a kennel.

The first night they met in their new quarters there had been a pitched battle between the dogs that had come with their boys and the indignant feline guests of the hotel. After much spitting and scratching, the cats retreated to a strategic position behind sacks of coal and drums of fuel oil, or disappeared between boards into the next room, where the dogs could not follow. Several disgusted huskies had bits of fur sticking to their lips, but also had bleeding noses and ragged ears; which caused Dan Kelly to say quite

impartially that while he considered the fight a draw it was a darned good show as long as it lasted.

The cats never appeared again at these sessions, though sometimes the dogs fought among themselves until they were, forcibly or by persuasion, convinced that only as noncombatants would they be permitted to remain. An occasional fierce growl was their sole protest to being neutral, and that was ignored. On the whole they were no more belligerent than the members of the City Council or the women's clubs, the Workers agreed, according to the gossip they heard in the bosom of their respective families.

At first they had met in the homes of the different members, but it was an unsatisfactory arrangement. The houses were for the most part small and lacking in privacy, because of the heating difficulties in that climate. Some of the parents, too, had shown a lack of respect for their high motives and the seriousness of their aims. Worse still, sisters and brothers had become familiar, accidentally or through the disgraceful means of eavesdropping, with passwords and parts of a solemn ritual. These they repeated, with great gusto, to an unsympathetic or amused audience.

One day in the hall before a school assembly Mamie Kelly gave a realistic imitation of three gruff husky growls which were the answer to three quavering whines in the high falsetto of a tiny pup, as impersonated by Mollie Day. These signified the welcome of a novice by a veteran into the ranks of the Wonder Workers; and the members experienced

humiliation as well as indignation over the fact that the secrets of the order were no longer secret. Their sarcastic and bitter allusions to "snoopers" and "spies" caused only laughter and not repentance. So, in view of the unfortunate publicity of matters that should have been sacred to them alone, they had been glad indeed to accept Jim Schwartzel's secluded hospitality.

Paul seated himself in an informal group ranged about a table and chatted till it was time for the roll call and the reading of the minutes of the previous meeting. Navarre lay on the floor, as did several other dogs now trained to observe the polite necessities of these occasions.

When Ted Wilson came in he was accompanied by Ned Darling's Yellow Peril, a free lance, who made it his business to go, by invitation or otherwise, wherever a gathering offered the possibility of excitement or refreshment.

The Yellow Peril, a King Island husky, was the professional beauty of canine Nome. He was tawny gold in color, with a white breast and sable markings on his head and back. The mistake that some humans and most dogs made in regard to him was to conclude that his good looks were his only asset. His satin coat covered muscles like wire springs, and his great charm of manner deceived people into believing him merely an elegant idler, a dog-about-town, with nothing to do but amuse himself; while, as a matter of fact, he was one of the hardest fighters in Nome, and struck

terror into the hearts of innocent by-standing pups when he was out looking for trouble.

As he passed Navarre he gave a supercilious glance at the newcomer and then deliberately knocked against him. Navarré rose with a snarl, sensing the insult; and but for the timely interference of Paul and Ted there would have been an exhibition match of strength and agility between the two dogs who embodied all the requirements that make for supremacy in their type.

Of course, a good scrap would have been a diversion, far more sporting than guerilla warfare between dogs and cats; but it would have lowered the "morale" of the meeting, and that was to be preserved at the cost of mere entertainment.

"Navarre's got lots of pluck," Paul thought. "Nothing of the cur about him. He'll hold his own with dogs or men. Even Black Mart and the Yellow Peril can't throw a scare into him."

After business was disposed of a debate was launched based on an age-old argument as to whether dogs possess reason or only instinct.

Paul Barrau and Dan Kelly were chosen to present the side of reason, while Ted Wilson and Gene Terry were to uphold that of instinct. The rest were to decide the merits of each case, and the losers were to pay a small fine into the ever depleted treasury.

Gene and Ted attempted to prove that good training and keen instinct might, in certain achievements,

appear like reason, but could be traced back to either of these two sources.

"There was Morte Atkinson's Llewellyn setter leader, True Blue, in one of the Sweepstakes," Gene offered in defense of his point. "Morte had unhooked him from the rest of the team to rest him. A terrible blizzard was blowing, and Morte had to stop to fix a strap on his sled. Some way his fur gloves that had been tied about his neck with a cord jerked off, and Morte didn't notice it till he'd started and wanted to put them on again. He knew he'd freeze his hands, but he couldn't find them even if he went back. The snow was thick; they'd be covered in a second. It was tough luck, and Morte said he was wondering what he could do when up trotted Blue with the gloves in his mouth. Reason? You bet it wasn't. Plain instinct. He's a bird dog, and it was natural for him to pick things up. Besides, he'd been trained for hunting and knew his stuff."

Gene was followed by Dan. "Look at old Dubby. His instinct's to kill everything that's little and furry. He's death on squirrels and rats and hates cats like poison. But whenever that fool cat, Texas, that belongs to the Allan girls, sneaks out for a prow, Dubby goes along and protects it from other dogs. He reasons it's part of his family and it's up to him to guard it, no matter how he feels. And he's some guard! He don't scrap much, but every dog in town knows what he could do if he wanted to and keeps off. My dad says that's what the papers call 'preparedness.'"

"That's training, too," Tim Neal exclaimed emphatically.

To which Dan replied, with withering sarcasm, remembering Tim's unsportsmanlike bribing of Prince with cookies, "You wouldn't know the meaning of training, Neal, if it was explained to you in words of one syllable. Training! It was *thinking*."

Then Paul was called. "Only this afternoon," he announced, "I saw Navarre figure something out for himself. He went downtown with me, and when we got home he was carrying a can of salmon in his mouth. I guess someone had dropped it from a package."

"More likely he stole it. It's because he's a thief that you got him, Mart Barclay says," from Tim, who was still smarting from the sting of Dan Kelly's remarks.

"He took it," Paul continued, undisturbed by this slur, "and sat down with it between his paws, and looked like he was working out a problem. Then he bit into the top with one of his tusks and kept on biting till he was around and could pry open the tin and get at the fish! What do you think of that?"

"Sam Milton showed him the trick," answered Gene skeptically. "I've seen a lot of dogs do it, and every one was taught." Whereupon a heated discussion arose that was only quieted by the sharp sound of the gavel.

"You can all bring more stories next time," Dan Kelly shouted above the noise. "This question ain't

settled yet—not by a long shot. But now it's time for eats."

Their differences of opinion went down before the enjoyment of the food provided. Hot-dog sandwiches, symbolic of the order, formed the main dish of their suppers. To which were added pickles and jams that had been coaxed from generous mothers or annexed from well stocked pantries, and a pie or two, if the meeting happened on a baking day.

Paul and Dan left the hotel together. As they went slowly along Steadman Avenue Dan said, "Get some more dope 'bout reasoning from Moose Jones for next time, and I'll see Seppala and Duffy O'Connor. So long, Paul."

"So long, Dan."

When Paul fastened Navarre in his house for the night he patted him gently on the head. "I'll tell the world you've more brains than most people and ten times as much as that Tim Neal. And Mart Barclay 'd better be mighty careful how he talks 'bout stealing. A grandson of Baldy of Nome 'll never have to steal. The whole town 'd fall over itself to give him a handout. But," proudly, "that's my job now."

CHAPTER THREE

THE TEAM GROWS

EARLY storms had covered the whole country with a soft white blanket of snow; but later, clear, cold weather had frozen the surface till the trails were in fine condition. They were smooth, with a crust that held even under the heaviest freighting.

Moose Jones took Paul and Navarre down to Prosser's shop to have the dog fitted to the finest harness that could be bought. A padded collar of tan leather, and light webbing of the same shade for the traces, with a little whiffletree of hardwood, finished at the ends in polished brass. As in the racing outfits, there was a coiled spring between this and the sled, so that flexibility was insured and a sudden jerk eased of any discomfort.

Paul and Moose talked over with George Prosser

the weighty question of the colors for the horsehair pompon to be placed at the top of the collar.

"Most plain colors and some combinations have been chosen by the different Sweepstakes teams," George said. "Not that it matters, if you want to duplicate that of a favorite. It's only a sentiment, anyway. Or you could just tie on any color you wanted for a race or any particular occasion."

"No," Paul answered, "I want Navarre to wear his colors all the time, like a soldier does his uniform."

"Well, then, let's see," George resumed. "Albert Fink has red, Allan and Darling white and gold, Fox-Maule Ramsay the tartan of his family, Seppala——"

"Oh, I know," the boy exclaimed suddenly, "I'll choose red, white, and blue; for America and France, my mother's and my father's countries. We can't beat that if we should think about it for a month." He leaned down to Navarre. "Do you hear that? You'll just *have* to be a wonderful dog with them behind you. Get me?" Navarre extended his paw; a little courtesy that Sam Milton had taught him when a very personal remark was made to him.

A sled was the next consideration, and they went to the Eskimo Mission, where the native men and boys were given manual training. Sled building was one of their accomplishments.

A sled made of stout, well-seasoned hickory was selected. The lines were graceful, copied from a racing model; and while small, it was large enough to carry

a passenger or a light load, yet not too big for Navarre to draw easily.

Mrs. Barrau shared Paul's enthusiasm over the purchases but gently chided Moose for his extravagance.

"But this is a good investment," he replied. "Paul may be able to earn some money with it, if he wants to. The best ain't none too fine fer a kid like him that aims t' git ahead. It kinda heartens a feller t' hev somethin' wuth while t' live up to."

Paul went out every day to exercise Navarre and practise driving. For an hour each afternoon he delivered packages for a friend of his mother's, who had a little fancy-goods shop. She paid him five dollars a week for his services, which he proudly turned over to Mrs. Barrau.

"You see Navarre is really earning his own living and a lot more," he remarked happily, and his mother smilingly agreed.

"It's too bad I can't open a bank account for him, since he's so industrious; but I'll open one in your name and trust you to give him his share of your joint earnings in affection."

"And I'll give him compound interest on it, too," Paul laughed. "I'm studying that now."

He tried hard to curb a feeling of superiority when he saw Tim Neal's sled, made of a packing box with the sides cut down; and a kitchen chair on runners that one of the other Workers used. "I'd 've been glad of anything at all a few days ago," he told him-

self severely, "and I mustn't get the swelled head because I've been lucky." Above all, he mustn't be selfish. So when he met Dan Kelly later he said, "Would you like to have Navarre for a couple of hours? I'm through with my deliveries, and when you've finished with him, trot him back to the house."

Shortly after dusk Dan returned, somewhat shaken and quite breathless. Paul answered the knock at the back door and surveyed his friend with astonishment. Dan's mackinaw was torn, he had lost his cap, and he was covered with muddy snow. "What's the matter?"

"Here, Paul, take your Rolls-Royce. He's too high-powered for me. Next time I'll try a gentle little Pupmobile that don't go sixty miles an hour and then some!"

"Did he run away?" Paul inquired anxiously.

"Run! He flew. I didn't s'pose anything on four legs could act so much like a flying machine. Seemed to me he just hit the high spots. But that's nothing to the rest of it."

Paul tied Navarre in the kennel. The dog wagged his tail vigorously, and the boy wondered if it was in apology or pride.

"Come on in and tell me about it."

The boys sat by the kitchen stove while Dan recounted his adventures.

"I happened to meet Lida Brown in front of her house, so I asked her to have a spin. Say, believe me she had it, all right. Navarre came 'gee' and 'haw'

and mushed and stopped whenever I ordered, just like a racing leader. We went out on the tundra beyond the sand spit; but on the way back, on the edge of town, we met the Yellow Peril looking for trouble. You know how he is."

Paul nodded.

"Well, he got more'n he was looking for. So," ruefully, "did we."

"Lida's crazy about the Peril, and called to him. He ran beside the sled, and she patted him on the head and talked baby talk to him. I guess he must have figured that Navarre was cutting him out with his girl friend, 'cause he stepped up and nipped Navarre on the shoulder and snarled. Regular insult, the way he did it."

"I've seen him," Paul responded. "No dog with any spunk 'll stand for it."

"Navarre tried to keep out of a row. Honest, he did. He just gave the Peril a mean once-over and growled a little, but went along minding his own business. Then the Peril seemed to think he could get by with anything. I guess he felt Lida was sorta rootin' for him on the side lines. So he bit Navarre on the ear, and of course he got mad."

"I don't blame him. He wouldn't 've been the pup I want him to be if he'd taken that from any dog."

"The Peril was smart enough to know he was in for some hot punishment and headed down Second Avenue with Navarre right behind him. Lida was hanging onto the sled and hollering, 'Stop them. I

can't stand a dog fight.' You know how silly girls are."

Paul nodded again. Even his mother, who wasn't silly about most things, was weak in this particular matter.

"By that time you might as well 've tried to stop two railroad trains by yellin' at 'em. I let out some things I hoped Lida was too excited to notice; but those dogs didn't know whether I was callin' 'em pet names or what I did."

"When the Peril cut up into Third Street, I saw he was headin' straight for home and mother. As we got to his house some woman was comin' out, and she and the Peril had a head-on collision that knocked her flat in the snow by the door. She was scared stiff and let out a terrible yell; and Navarre bolted right into the living room after him, sled and all. Lida got spilled out and was screeching to beat the band, and Mrs. Darling ran for a broom. Might 've been a straw for all the good it did. Then she telephoned for help, and she was so rattled she must 'a' called 'bout every number in the book. For pretty soon her husband and the police and the Fire Department all showed up, and the judge and the lawyers from the Courthouse next door. I guess they thought there was a nice juicy murder on, or something keen like that. It looked to me like all of Nome was there before the thing was over."

"Oh, gee, and I missed it," Paul exclaimed sadly. Then, "Did Navarre win?"

"Well, he came out in the best shape. Only a few gashes and none of 'em deep. I'd unhooked the sled to give him an even break; and say, Kid, I'll hand it to your pup for pep and guts. He don't know the meanin' of the word 'quit.'"

"A good Northern dog *has* to be like that, Dan. Not afraid of anything. But I'm glad he didn't pick on the Peril first. I don't want him to get in bad that way."

"It sure was pretty," Dan resumed, "to watch the Peril prancin', light as a cat on his feet, and Navarre never backin' down for a minute. Like champions in a ring; both of 'em with hair bristlin' and teeth showin'. Say, I guess it would have been one of the best scraps ever pulled off here if those women hadn't butted in. But you should 've seen the room. Wrecked. Furniture upset, curtains torn down, ink spilled from the desk, a big lamp busted. Nothing like it was before but the pictures on the wall and the lights on the ceiling. They couldn't reach them."

"Anybody hurt? Lida . . ." Paul asked.

"Only her feelings. But she's sore as a boil at me. Seemed to think I could 've stopped it before it got started. I'm all off girls; they're cry-babies and spoilsports. I'd better mosey along now and see if I can't find my cap. I think I lost it when we skidded around the last corner."

Paul went to the telephone and rang up the Darling home. The Peril's owner answered. The boy was glad that he had a bank account and could offer to pay

for any damage caused by Navarre's share in the mix-up.

Mr. Darling only laughed. "No, Paul, the damages are on me. The price of having the handsomest malamute on Seward Peninsula, and the cockiest. He's not so handsome, either, as he was an hour ago; leg bandaged and a patch over one ear. It may teach him a lesson; he's been so sure of himself he'd have tackled a polar bear, if one had come his way. Hope Navarre's no worse for the scrimmage. No? That's fine. Good-night."

With some misgivings Paul told his mother and Moose of the fight and was greatly relieved that they did not blame Navarre, who, after all, had merely acted in self-defense.

After the arrival of the next dog-team mail Mrs. Barrau handed Paul a letter from his grandfather to them both. The writing was fine and clear, but written, evidently, by the unsteady hand of age.

Paul had learned French as early as he had English, and his mother insisted that he should speak it with her every day and read the French books she procured from time to time in Seattle. He translated the letter as he read it aloud, hesitating only over the more difficult words.

MY DEAR DAUGHTER AND GRANDSON:

It is some months since I last wrote you, but I have not been well. It is nothing serious; merely the natural infirmities of my years. I wish that I might see you before the end comes for me. I am a lonely old man; more lonely than

ever since Louis has gone to the Congo for a French commercial company of wide interests in Africa. I can hear from him only at long intervals, and I fear for his health, as the climate is very bad there. It was, however, an excellent opportunity for him in a business way; and it may enable him, some day, to restore our home to its former beauty.

As you know, things have not gone well with us financially, and the estate has suffered in consequence. The gardens have been much neglected, and only a small part of the château is habitable. I live in that with two servants who are faithful and competent, and there are a few others who take care of the surrounding farm. Unless Louis should marry again and have children, which does not seem probable, the Château de Treville will go to Paul eventually. I would like to have you know and love it while I am still here.

Then followed an account of his simple daily life, pathetic in its dreary routine.

As Mrs. Barrau took the letter from Paul she said, "You read that very well, dear. Hardly a mistake. You are improving in spite of the fact you have so little practice."

"But I'm having a lot of practice now, Mother. I'm teaching Navarre. First I give him an order in English and then in French, so he knows it's the same thing. He was sort of rattled till he got wise to it. When I'm dead sure of him I'll spring it on the gang. That'll make 'em sit up and take notice. Some class to a dog that understands two languages!"

Mrs. Barrau smiled. Then, as she folded the letter

and laid it in her desk she said seriously, "I feel more than ever that we should go to France soon, Paul. Your uncle Louis lost his wife when he was quite young, and they were childless. You are the last of the line, and your father would have wished us to give this happiness to an old man who may not have long to live."

"But the money, Mother?"

"If the mine does well this spring we might go over for two or three months; even if we have to come back and work harder than ever to pay for the trip. I'll talk it over with Moose Jones. I think he'll agree with me."

There was a certain thrill to Paul in her suggestion, and a certain dread, too. It would mean leaving Moose and all of his friends—and Navarre; though only for a little while. On the other hand, it would be exciting to stay in the château in Alsace, with its moat and drawbridge that had so delighted him in the picture. And maybe there'd be secret passages and dungeons. Perhaps there'd even be a story of a ghost, supposed to wander about the empty corridors on stormy nights, rattling chains and groaning. It might be without a head, or have a dagger stuck through its heart. Gee, it gave a fellow gooseflesh just to think of it. But what stuff to tell the Wonder Workers when he got back. And aside from all this, he *did* feel sorry for his grandfather, who seemed to have nothing to do but read and think of the past. Poor old guy, it was tough all right.

A week later Paul was sitting in his favorite place on the big living-room couch, absorbed in *Treasure Island*. It was only a little after three o'clock; but the darkness comes early in the Arctic winter, and he had been obliged to turn on the lights. His mother was out for the afternoon, and Moose was busy in his cabin with a man who had come down from the Kougarok with a report on the property there.

Paul had let Navarre out for a run, knowing that he would return shortly, go directly to his kennel, and stay in it quietly until it was time for him to be fed.

Suddenly there was a sound of scratching followed by sharp barks.

The boy opened the door to find Navarre standing on the porch with a shivering, bedraggled female malamute beside him. Navarre nosed the wretched creature over the threshold, glancing appealingly at Paul.

"Well, I'll be darned," he exclaimed in astonishment. "Looks like something the cat 'd bring in, 'stead of what a real husky like you'd pick up, Navarre."

He leaned over to examine the dog, but she shrank away, whimpering.

There was a bit of stout rope attached to a shabby leather collar, which was far too tight about the thin neck. Paul called Navarre into the kitchen, and his companion followed timidly.

The boy placed a pan on the floor and filled it with milk into which he broke several generous slices of

bread. The malamute fell upon it ravenously, with Navarre standing by, wagging his tail. Paul saw through the window that Moose Jones's caller was leaving.

"Come on over, Moose. I want to show you something."

"All right, Son. I'll just turn off the draft in my stove."

When Moose entered, Paul pointed to the dog and explained what had happened.

Moose eyed her thoughtfully. "Seems to me like I've saw her before." He was practically a canine directory for Nome. He knew almost every sled dog in the vicinity by sight, and the pedigrees of many of them, as well as their owners and the conditions of their various kennels.

He spoke to the newcomer gently; and, though still cringing, she went to him at once, just as Navarre had responded from the very first.

Moose had a friendly way with all animals that won their confidence. And Paul recalled that when he had visited Moose at a claim out on Little Creek, the ground squirrels and wild birds gathered about the shack to be fed, quite without fear.

Moose, stroking the dog's head, discovered the rope. "Humph! She couldn't 'a' chewed that herself; too close t' the collar. An' it's chewed, not busted. Well, I'll be blamed ef I don't reckon Navarre done it, he's so sorta pleased with hisself. Mebbe he seen this little lady was in trouble an' remembered how he

felt when Black Mart had him chained up. Say, kid, mebbe we cud git him inter that there society outside fer the prevention—well, I jest don't rekerllect its name, but I guess you know what I mean."

"The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals."

"That's it. He sure oughta belong to it ef he had sense enough t' let this pore thing free. I got it now. Slick Turner, who lives at the fur end o' Steadman Avenoo, owns her. I was there jest before I went up t' the Kougarok t' see ef I couldn't buy a coupla dogs cheap. He's allers got more 'n he kin take care of decently. But they was all so ornery I jest passed 'em up cold. None of 'em good sled dogs 'cept this one, an' she had a litter o' pups too young t' git along without her. An' I wasn't aimin t' raise no family on a bottle."

Paul found a soup bone with plenty of meat on it and was about to offer it to the visitor when Mrs. Barrau came in. As usual, she was sympathetic.

"Look at the marks on her back. Do you suppose she's been beaten?"

"Wouldn't surprise me none, knowin' Slick."

"Poor thing," Mrs. Barrau sighed. "This is a hard country for both people and dogs—especially dogs."

"Well, it is and it ain't," Moose answered slowly. "The country ain't no picnic grounds, and the people's got t' hev plenty o' backbone t' stand it; but most dogs is well cared fer, even ef they do hev t' work. An' them that's abused ain't no worse off

than some kids I seen way down in New York City when I was there onct. It was hotter 'n the hinges, an' them babies jest set right in the gutter tryin' t' git cool by playin' a hose on theirselves. An' some of 'em was eatin' bread crusts that Navarre here 'd turn up his nose at. An' that thin an' white . . . No, m'am, I'd say on the whole, *any* pups in Alaska's better off 'n them slum kids in big cities."

"But what can we do about her?" Paul's eyes were full of concern.

"Well, we can't do nothin' to-night but see she's filled up with good grub an' turn her loose. Mark my words, she'll stick 'round these diggin's, an' tomorrow I'll go over t' Turner's. Ef I find he's bein' cruel t' his dogs I'll go t' the marshal, an' Slick 'll git jerked up good an' plenty. Marshal Jordan's a dog man, an' he won't stand fer their bein' beat up an' half starved. He'll tell Slick where t' head in at."

Paul's mother suggested that he take the bone out to Navarre's house and let the stray stay there for the night. "It will be warm and comfortable for her, and you may keep Navarre in your room, if you wish."

Early the next morning Paul went out to the kennel. The bone, lying on the straw, had been gnawed clean, but the malamute was gone. At breakfast he remarked to Moose Jones gravely, "You had the wrong dope on that dog. You said she couldn't be driven away; but I've been up and down the street whistling, and there's no sign of her."

Moose grinned. "Mebbe she's one o' these here females that kinda enjoys bein' treated rough. No disrespeck t' your sect, m'am," he turned to Mrs. Barrau, "but I'm allers readin' in the papers 'bout women who lets their husbands pretty nigh kill 'em and won't swear out no complaint. Never could savvy it. Seems plain cuckoo t' me."

"But she looked smart, even if she was scared," Paul urged.

"Yep, she did. She wasn't no fool, an' I can't git it straight, her bein' in sich a rush t' quit a place like this an' folks like us. Anyway, I'll git my parka and mush along t' Turner's. Won't do no harm t' see what he's up to. An' when you git back from school I kin tell you what I find. I ain't goin' t' let Slick do no side-steppin' in this here business, neither."

As Moose Jones went out there was an amazed chuckle. "Well, I'll be doggoned. Look who's here!"

Mrs. Barrau and Paul followed him quickly. Sitting in front of the door was the missing malamute. With her was another dog, eight or nine months old, who would have been unusually handsome except for his extreme emaciation and a ragged coat of dirty, matted hair.

"One o' the fam'ly I wouldn't be nurse girl to, I reckon," Moose observed. "An' ef his ma ain't done fer him jest what Navarre done fer her—chawed the rope he was tied with!"

Paul was greatly excited; and only Mrs. Barrau's promise to feed both dogs and keep them till his re-

turn reconciled him to the fact that he must leave for school at once.

At recess the Wonder Workers were hardly less thrilled than Paul had been over the Good Samaritan act of Navarre and the repetition of it on the part of the malamute mother.

"Seems like nothin' can keep a dog team off you," Tim Neal observed enviously. "Here I've had to scrap with my whole darned family just for one dog—Prince. Father said he'd eat too much. Mother said he'd track mud in the house, and my old maid aunt said he wasn't any ornament. Ornament!" disgustingly. "She's the kind that likes cats and lap dogs. Well, that's the sort of a family I have; and it's no snap, I'm tellin' you, to have to live with 'em and not be a sissy."

"But you see these dogs aren't mine," Paul answered. "That's what makes me feel so bad about them. Likely they'll have to be handed back to Slick Turner, and he may treat 'em worse 'n ever, 'cause they're what's sickin' Moose onto him. Gee, I wish they did belong to me. With Navarre as a leader and the other two in the wheel, I'd have a crack team right off the bat. Moose says the mother is a good sled worker, and the pup 'd be a peach if he was only fatter and cleaner." Then, with renewed faith in Moose Jones's ability to right all wrongs, "Anyway, I guess Moose 'll do something. He never lays down on any job he tackles."

"I'll say he don't," agreed Dan Kelly. "I saw him

finish up a job once in snappy shape, and I never forgot it. Tom Haller, who belongs to that tough gang at the other end of town, had put a kitten on a big box top and floated it off on Snake River. Moose happened along and heard it meowing something awful. He waded out as far as he could, and then had to swim; but he got the kitten all right. Of course, Tom lit out in a hurry, but Moose is a keen sprinter and caught up with him. He yanked that kid back to the river bank and soused him in the water till he looked like a drowned rat. Then he sat down on a log and laid Tom over his knee and spanked him with a shingle he'd picked up. Tom was pretty big for that kind of a deal; but he was sniveling like a girl when Moose finished with him. I nearly laughed my head off. And what Moose said—well, it was an earful, believe me. That's the sort of a guy Moose is, and I'll bet he gets the best of Slick Turner, if it comes to a showdown."

Paul could hardly wait for school to close, he was so eager to learn what Moose had done in regard to the dogs. Equally eager, Dan, Ted, and Gene went home with him.

The issue was of real importance to them all; for there now seemed to be a possibility, however vague, that a member of their distinguished association might possess a real team, instead of merely one dog, which so far had been the limit in the kennels of the order.

They found Moose enjoying a pipe in his cabin;

and beside Navarre's house were two more, from each of which a head was thrust at the sound of the boys' voices.

"He's got them," Paul cried excitedly. He gave the dogs a hasty caress and bolted into the cabin with his companions.

"How did you do it, Moose? Did you have to lick Turner—or what?"

They gathered about the stove and waited anxiously for his answer.

"No, Son, it was dead easy. No bother a-tall. I walked up to his dump, where he was in the yard mendin' a fish net. I says, 'Hello, Slick, I reckon you want t' sell two o' your dogs right bad, don't you? A gray malamute an' a grown-up pup o' hern.' He looked at me kinda queer and says, 'Dunno ez I do. Where did you git that dope? That malamute's a good worker, an' the pup 'll be A1 when he's broke in. I'm aimin' t' use 'em both all winter, haulin' freight t' Bear Creek.' An' I says, innocent like, 'Well, mebbe Marshal Jordan was mistook, but he told me certain sure you'd be tickled t' death t' sell the female fer about twenty-five dollars an' the other fer no more 'n fifteen. Seems like he got the idee you was short on dog feed—they're so slat ribbed. An' he suspicioned they might be givin' you a lot o' trouble, they look so sorta beat up. He don't hold t' whippin' dogs, only t' make 'em mind, an' not much then.' Turner jest grunted an' went on mendin'. 'He's bin keepin' his eye on a few dog beaters that's bin re-

ported lately,' I went on, pleasant ez ef we was jest passin' the time o' day. 'I happened t' be tellin' Jordan I needed a coupla dogs, an' he says t' me, "Slick Turner's got a lot; and ef the two you want is more 'n he kin manage, I reckon he'll be tickled t' git rid of 'em right away fer about forty dollars.'"

"Slick give me a mean look an' mumbled somethin' I didn't quite ketch.

"'Ef the money ain't jest all you're wantin', mebbe there's other things more persuadin',' I says, sorta careless. But while I was sayin' it I doubled my fist an' raised my arm like I was stretchin'. He tumbled quick. His face was black ez tar, but he says, meek enough, 'Give me fifty an' you kin hev 'em.'

"Then I says, 'I'll split it. Here's forty-five. With the diff'rence I kin pick up two dog houses. Seen 'em yesterday.'

"'The dogs ain't here jest now,' he says, 'but I'll fetch 'em along later.'

"'No need,' I says. 'They're makin' me a little visit this minit; an' ez they ain't got no baggage t' come back fer I'll mush along an' tell 'em t' set right down an' make theirselves t' home.'"

"Gee, that was great," the boys chorused.

Moose Jones modestly waved aside all credit. "That wasn't no fairy tale 'bout Jordan, neither. I did go t' him first, an' found out that Slick ain't none too pop'lar in the marshal's office. 'Tain't jest over the way he treats his dogs; there's other little things, too. Him an' Mart Barclay's too free an' easy with

stuff that ain't theirs. With the marshal's name a-stickin' in his craw, I reckon Slick was willin' t' slide the money in his jeans an' call it quits. But ef he hadn't saw it my way—"Moose almost unconsciously flexed the muscles of his right arm, and regarded his doubled fist speculatively—"well, there's ways an' means o' being convincin'; but you don't hev t' convince a *good* man with some of 'em. Don't you boys ever forgit that."

CHAPTER FOUR

CHRISTMAS AT MOOSE'S CABIN

ABOUT the middle of December Moose Jones spoke of returning to the Kougarok. "I've done all I kin here," he told Mrs. Barrau. "Fixed things up with the bank, ordered new machinery, an' sich. What we want's t' wash out enough gold by spring so you an' Paul kin make that there little mush over t' France you was talkin' 'bout."

"Sometimes I think I don't want to go at all," Paul remarked. "If it wasn't for my grandfather being old and lonesome, I'd rather stay right here in Nome, now I've got a dog team; and in summer it's such fun to hunt and fish. Gee, if I do go, maybe I'll have to keep dressed up from morning to night and talk French all the time."

"You kin thank your stars, Son, you wasn't born

in that there châttoo and have t' live up t' them doodads that goes along with it. Your dad used t' let things drop now an' agin that made me mighty sorry fer a kid raised like he was. I reckon he had a nurse girl trottin' after him till he was nigh ez big ez you, an' wore lace collars an' curls. Yep, you're pretty lucky t' be a plain Alaska sourdough 'stead of a French count."

Paul lost no chance of urging Moose to let his mother and himself return to the mine with him. "You say someone will bring your dogs down for you, and Mother could be your passenger back. I could take what we need in my sled, and we could stay till school opens in January. I can do pretty near a man's work, and Mother can keep house for us. Please say yes, Moose."

"It's O.K. with me, if you think you kin stand my cabin fer two er three weeks, Mrs. Barrau. It ain't no swell jint like this," he glanced about the pleasant room with admiration, "but it's weather proof an' warm; an' ef you can't be comfortable, you kin go over t' the Hot Springs Road House fer a spell. 'Tain't more 'n ten mile."

"I'll enjoy the change," she answered; and to Paul's delight the trip was considered settled.

Selecting names for the new dogs now became an important matter to the boy. He decided not to keep those used by Slick Turner. As in the case of Navarre, he thought, they might be associated in the dogs' minds with harshness and abuse. The question was

brought up at the next meeting of the Wonder Workers and debated seriously.

"Let's call the mother Hope," Dan Kelly suggested. "I'll bet she hoped you'd take them both in when she sneaked her pup away from Slick."

"It's easy to say, too," Ted Wilson added; "and when you're driving a team you don't want to be bawlin' out long-winded, high-falutin names like George Washington or Napoleon Bonaparte. And there's too many Toms, Petes, and Jacks already. You want something no one else has, and classy. Snappy, anyway."

After a little deliberation Paul announced his decision. "All right, I'll call her Hope and him Hobo. That's what he looked like when he came to me."

So Hope and Hobo were christened then and there with a generous sprinkling of ginger ale, the ceremony being modeled after that attached to the naming of a battleship, of which they had read recently. The dismay of the two dogs at this strange proceeding was eased somewhat by the fact that immediately after the solemn rites they were treated to bones and cookies.

Each day Paul used the three dogs in making deliveries, and as he had picked up several other patrons, his income was increased to nearly ten dollars a week. Navarre showed a real affection for the other two, which they returned gratefully; so that Paul had the satisfaction of peace and harmony in his kennel.

Soon Moose Jones's team arrived from the Kougarok and were stabled in an empty barn not far from the Barrau home.

"They're kinda like remnants picked up at a bargain sale," Moose remarked as they went to feed and water them, "but they're good-natured an' strong, an' I ain't aimin' fer style ner speed. The fellers up my way call 'em my Ford 'cause they take you there an' they git you back; an' that's all that consarns me."

Paul felt that they did indeed lack the distinction of his team, but was too polite to say it. Navarre had developed into a superb creature, with a thick gray coat and sable markings on his head and back, and Hope and Hobo were much like him; a trifle lighter and more silvery in tone, and almost as large. Paul was proud of their evenly matched appearance and even more proud of their willingness to work for him, which they showed by their joy whenever he pulled the sled out from its shelter under the back porch. He and Moose had bought some second-hand harness and patched it up for the newcomers.

"It don't show up very good beside Navarre's," Moose said, "but when things is easier we'll fix 'em up so's they won't feel ashamed o' their clothes. I reckon jest now they won't be fussy; so long 's they ain't got a whip held over 'em."

By the morning of the twenty-third everything was in readiness for the journey. Mrs. Barrau was tucked into the big sled and covered with a fur robe;

while Paul carried the suitcases and bags, which were lashed securely beneath a heavy piece of tarpaulin.

He stepped on the runners at the back, following Moose closely. He hoped that Mart Barclay or Slick Turner might happen to see them pass; or at least that Tim Neal might catch a glimpse of them as they went out Steadman Avenue toward the tundra.

For the first time in his life Paul was equipped fully as a regular musher. Over a sweater he wore a parka of ground squirrel, which had a wolverine ruff around the edge of the hood; the long hair of the wolverine being a special protection to the face. On his feet were a pair of mukluks made of native-tanned hide; and his mittens, a birthday gift from his mother, were of moose skin lined with muskrat and fastened by a braided cord of worsted which went about his neck. There was a cross cord over his chest, so that he could slip his hands in and out of the mittens, without danger of losing them.

The air was very still, and the clouds hung low, but it was not cold for that season of the year, the thermometer barely dropping below zero.

"Looks like we might git inter a flurry o' snow before long," Moose said, scanning the sky thoughtfully. "But we'll make the Nugget Road House easy, at that. I'd ruther we'd hev a storm anyway than them thaws that sometimes comes onexpected. When the whole country 's froze up tight you know what t' count on; but a thaw eats inter a trail an' does a lot o' damage."

Moose Jones set the pace, and Paul was just behind him. Mile after mile they went at a clipping gait, and Paul was thrilled by the fine team work his dogs were showing. Soon they had passed Little Creek with its collection of houses, and were out in the open country where the thickly crusted trail was staked, at intervals, by tall iron rods topped with small pennants of red cloth; the care of the United States Road Commission.

Occasionally they passed a lonely shack, where they would stop for a brief chat with the occupant. It was after twelve when Moose suggested halting at a road house for lunch.

The place was run by a Swede, who met them at the door. "Just in time for a good feed," he announced hospitably. "I shot a few ptarmigan yesterday, and caught some trout under the ice in the river this morning."

"Well, I'm ready for it, I could almost eat them raw, the way I feel now," Paul answered, as he and Moose, having stabled their teams, sniffed the appetizing odors that came from the kitchen.

In a few moments their host brought in platters heaped with broiled trout and ptarmigan over which were laid thin strips of crisp bacon. A plate of hot, light biscuits caused Moose to exclaim, "The kind that Mother used t' make ain't got nothin' on these. Don't be bashful, George never counts 'em; an' don't forgit it's apt t' be a long time between eats in this neck o' the woods."

They remained till the dogs were thoroughly rested. "Yourn ain't used t' steady travelin' like mine, Paul; an' even if they air better, you ain't got so many. We mustn't drive 'em too hard at first. Nothin' like breakin' 'em gradual, like you do a autymobile. Fifty mile a day 's only fer seasoned old-timers, an' we ain't in no rush."

Later in the afternoon the snow began to fall softly; but it was not thick enough to hide the flags on the trail stakes, even in the early dusk.

As they approached a river to be crossed Moose regarded it doubtfully. "You better go first, Son. Your sled's lighter, an' this ice don't look thick enough t' be safe. We'll see how it stands up under your outfit, an' if it's O.K. I'll be right after you."

The ice held, and Paul shouted from the far side, "It didn't even crack. Seams pretty solid."

Moose, with a nod, called to his leader Dick. "All right, hop along; I reckon we kin make it."

He had almost reached the opposite bank when he heard an ominous creaking. Clearly his load was too heavy. He must dash ahead—it was only a few yards.

"Snap into it, Dick. Step on the gas, babies!" The dogs darted forward with a jerk and gained the shore just as the crust beneath the rear end of the sled broke. They were almost dragged back by the weight behind them and struggled violently to regain their foothold.

Paul saw the difficulty, and unhooking Navarre,

hitched him in front of Dick, urging him to pull his hardest. The combined efforts of all the dogs finally tugged the sled up the steep incline; but not before Moose, who had pushed with all his strength in an effort to keep Mrs. Barrau from falling in, had stood for several minutes in the cold water up to his armpits.

When they were once more on the trail Mrs. Barrau was much concerned about Moose. His furs were dripping, the water oozed from his high boots at every step, and his teeth were chattering.

"You can't dry off with so much dampness in the air, Moose, and it's a long way to Nugget. Isn't there some place nearer where we could stop for a little while?" Mrs. Barrau asked.

Moose made light of his predicament. "It ain't the fust time it's happened t' me, an' it won't be the last. All in the day's work."

Then, to her insistent urging, "Yes, Haas, a young Frenchman who's prospectin' 'round here, has a cabin not more 'n a mile away."

Soon they saw a small building to the right. "That's it," Moose added, as they left the main route and headed across the tundra.

As they drew up in front of the door René Haas welcomed them cordially. "Come in. I have a good fire, and I'll make you some tea. You must be nearly frozen." His English had only a slight foreign accent, and when he discovered that Mrs. Barrau and Paul spoke French he was delighted. He chatted with them

in his native tongue, while Moose busied himself in the bedroom taking out fresh clothes from his dunage bag.

"Lucky I got extry things," Moose announced as he joined the others before the stove. "Even ef my parka 's a bit dampish, this heavy sweater 'll keep me from gittin' chilled."

They remained nearly two hours, and when they left René gave Mrs. Barrau a number of Paris papers, and promised to see her when he returned to Nome. He was from Alsace and knew the De Barrau château well. It was, he said, one of the show places of his part of the country, and Paul was spellbound by what he told of its ancient splendor; especially of the moat and drawbridge and the dungeons beneath its massive walls.

As he came out to assist his departing guests, René Haas caressed Navarre's head admiringly. He was an expert driver himself and instantly saw in him the desired points of a sled dog. "A fine leader. Looks as if he might develop into a Sweepstakes star some day. With that name he should do something big."

Paul fairly beamed. "That's what I'm training him for. His two grandfathers are Baldy of Nome and Dubby. I guess you know them both."

"Of course, everyone does."

"A dog with that blood," Paul continued enthusiastically, "just *has* to be something great."

"That's so," was the smiling reply. "Blood will

tell in the long run, I think, in men and dogs. Good-bye, and a pleasant trip to you all."

He watched them strike out again for the main trail, his slender figure outlined against the light in the cabin, and his dark eyes fixed intently on the boy and his dogs. "Good blood," he murmured to himself as he went in and closed the door. "The De Barrau blood that has always done splendid things for France. And Paul is every inch a De Barrau."

Alsace had seemed very close to him while he had talked of it to Mrs. Barrau and her son, and very far away now as he glanced out over the bleak wastes, treeless and barren, in the waning light of the Arctic afternoon.

It was quite dark when the travelers reached the Nugget Road House, where the Nelson brothers, who ran it, made them comfortable for the night.

The rooms were separated by thin partitions, and Mrs. Barrau was wakened several times by spells of hard coughing that came from the one next her, occupied by Paul and Moose. In the morning, however, Moose insisted that he had slept soundly and felt no ill effects from his plunge in the icy stream.

They were on their way again before nine o'clock, so that they might count on reaching their destination early enough to put the cabin in order that day.

They decided on the shortest route—across the Golden Gate Divide, which was steep, with a heavy grade, but which saved them several miles.

Paul saw, with much satisfaction, that his team

followed the pace set by Moose, in spite of the difference in the number of dogs they were using.

Navarre had a long, easy lope and held his head high, as if proud of his leadership; while Hope and Hobo, now that they had recovered from harsh treatment and a lack of nourishing food, worked with an enthusiasm that Paul liked to believe was their manner of expressing contentment and gratitude.

He gave his orders to Navarre in French, and the dog had learned that "Marchons" meant "Mush," and increased his speed whenever the word was spoken. How surprised the Wonder Workers would be at this accomplishment! Even Tim Neal would have to admit that Prince wasn't in it with Navarre. Poor old Prince, who wouldn't even come "gee" and "haw" without bribery.

About three o'clock they had left the towering mountains behind them and were in the level Kruzgamapa Valley, which was broken here and there by groves of small, leafless willows that shone skeleton-like against the even whiteness of the snow.

In the distance Paul saw a small black dot. Moose, slowing up, waved his hand toward it. "Home, sweet home, an' we'll be there in half an hour." Jones's team, with the certainty of rest and dinner in the immediate future, covered the ground quickly, and it was barely twenty minutes before they were at the end of their journey.

Moose helped Mrs. Barrau from the sled and threw open the door, which was not locked.

"Allers leave it that way," he explained, "so 's anybody as needs to kin come in fer shelter. Law o' the trail here'bouts."

"Is your hospitality never abused?" Mrs. Barrau asked as she stepped in and looked about her with interest.

"Never has bin yit," Moose responded. "Sometimes folks leave money on the table, ef they've et up a lot o' grub, or send stuff back from Nome. An' they cut more willers ef they've burnt my wood. No, m'am, Alaskans is pretty civilized compared t' some o' the high-binders outside what 'd steal the shirt offen your back, if they was let."

They entered a good sized room with the inevitable huge stove, which was almost in the middle. From one end a tiny kitchen opened, and from that it was but a step into a long shed that served as a storage space for fuel and as a kennel for the dogs.

At the other end of the living room, in which Paul and Moose were to sleep on cots, was a lean-to bedroom into which Mrs. Barrau was shown with much ceremony. "Jest used," Moose announced, "when royalty an' quality comes t' visit. An'," with a wink at Paul, "I reckon that folks that's headed fer a French châttoo gits in under that wire, all right." He began to build fires immediately, while the others took off their wraps.

The inside of the cabin was finished in rough, unpainted boards on which Moose had tacked colored covers from magazines to relieve the bareness. There

were lynx robes over the cots and on the floor, where they made soft, warm rugs. Several big chairs and a heavy table completed the furniture; and there were four coal-oil lamps set in iron brackets fastened to the wall for light. One big reading lamp was on the table, which was littered with old newspapers, pipes, tobacco tins, and other odds and ends.

Mrs. Barrau found flour in the kitchen and quickly stirred up some muffins; and while they were baking she made the place tidy. She had brought several bright cushions which she laid on the cots, a gay tablecloth, and other attractive trifles small enough to have been easily tucked in the sled.

When Paul and Moose came in, having fed and watered the teams, the latter glanced about him approvingly. "It's jest as swell as the Palace Hotel in Frisco, where I stayed onct when I was outside an' feelin' kinda flush, an' it's a heap more welcomin'."

It was not long before a hot supper was ready. They had brought ham, eggs, and a small amount of supplies from Nome, and whatever else was necessary they expected to buy at a general store in Shelton, a few miles away.

Moose was coughing now with alarming frequency, and Mrs. Barrau, seeing his flushed face, feared he had fever. "Have you a thermometer? I think I'd better take your temperature."

He laughed heartily. "There's one hangin' outside the kitchen door, but I reckon even my big mouth wouldn't hold it."

She rose and looked in a cupboard in the corner. It held merely half-filled bottles of dog remedies and some shaving things. "There seems to be nothing here I can give you, so I'll make a mustard plaster for your chest. And if your cold is any worse to-morrow we'll call up Dr. Sloane at the Hot Springs." She nodded toward the telephone. "He told me last week he was coming for the holidays, and as to-morrow's Christmas he'll surely be there."

"I don't need a doctor, an' the phone ain't workin'," Moose admitted with evident relief. "It went out o' business jest afore I left fer Nome, an' I didn't report it. Now you're here I'll git it fixed right away."

His voice was very hoarse, and the cough sounded deep seated and wracking.

In the morning, after an almost sleepless night, Moose could no longer conceal the fact that he was really ill, though he rebelled stoutly against Mrs. Barrau's order that he should remain in bed. Hampered by the lack of medicines, she could only apply fresh plasters at intervals and keep him warmly covered.

Paul was much worried but made an effort to hide the fact by an apparent interest in their Christmas preparations.

As an unexpected treat, Mrs. Barrau had brought a mysterious sack from which she now produced a turkey and all that goes with it for a real holiday dinner.

The boy cut a small willow and fastened it on a

stand. "Looks pretty queer," he observed ruefully, "with no leaves and no smell; but Mother has some trimmings from last year, and there are plenty of presents for us all, so that'll help."

Moose beckoned to Mrs. Barrau, and a whispered conversation took place between them. Then she went to his bag and lifted out a large, neatly wrapped package and several smaller ones, laying them beneath the bare branches of the tree.

Paul added those he had brought and hung strips of crinkled red paper, colored glass balls, and strands of silver and gilt tinsel on the twigs. "Not so bad," he said, as he finished and joined his mother in the kitchen.

"We'll have an early dinner, Paul. You may bring in some more wood for me." Then, as he appeared with an armful, she carefully closed the door between them and the living room.

"I'm afraid Moose is much worse than he pretends. I don't like his hard breathing. This may develop into pneumonia." She sighed. "If I could only use the telephone, we'd have Dr. Sloane over in no time, and I'd feel easier."

"Couldn't I go and bring him back with me?" Paul asked. "It's only about ten miles, and with a couple of Moose's dogs and my own I'd make the round trip, with a rest for the team, in four hours at the longest."

"But the trail—you've never been over it," his mother objected.

"Oh, Moose told me only yesterday that it's well broken and staked."

Mrs. Barrau shook her head doubtfully. "Only if it seems absolutely necessary. You've had so little experience. Perhaps he'll feel better when he's had something hot. We'll see later."

At two o'clock the sun, which had shone feebly at intervals during the morning, went down behind dark, threatening clouds that veiled the mountains. A storm seemed certain.

While Mrs. Barrau busied herself setting the table and making it attractive with red ribbons and artificial holly, Paul tried to talk cheerfully of what was in store for them on the tree.

Moose occasionally said a few words in a thick voice, but with such effort that he soon lapsed into silence; giving a nod now and then to let the boy know he was listening.

When dinner was served Moose said to Mrs. Barrau apologetically, "That there bird sure looks good, but I ain't got much appetite. Never do hev 'less I exercise a lot. I reckon I jest better lay an' watch you an' Paul tuck away a real feed; an' mebbe to-morrer I kin enjoy the remains with you."

It was not the jolly meal they had anticipated. Moose, after finishing a cup of broth, dropped into an uneasy doze. The others, fearing to wake him, spoke infrequently in low tones, glancing often at the flushed face of the man whose breathing was becoming more and more labored.

"Now fer the s'prises," Moose said huskily, rousing himself.

Paul went to the tree, glad of the diversion of taking the packages from it and handing them, with much ceremony, to his mother and Moose. His own he laid on a chair to watch them open theirs.

Mrs. Barrau received a blue foxskin which Moose had secured from a neighboring trapper, and a silk sweater and some dainty trifles that Paul had carefully selected from the best shops in Nome.

Moose was clearly delighted with several pairs of socks that Mrs. Barrau had knitted for him and with new fur-lined gloves from Paul.

"I had Mollie Dexter of Bluff make them," the boy explained with pride, realizing that Moose would know that no one else in all the North could turn out anything so perfect.

"I'd know that, Son, ef I seen 'em lyin' loose on the trail," Moose answered. "She's got a touch, Mollie has, that can't be beat. But that there beadwork round the wrists is pretty swell fer me. It sure will doll me up, though, when I want t' look my purtiest."

Paul's smaller parcels yielded ties and handkerchiefs and an envelope on which was written, "With love from Mother," and which contained a slip of paper from which he read, "This is a new suit of clothes waiting for you at home."

There was a clasp knife from Dan Kelly, a fountain pen from Ted Wilson, and a pocket drinking cup from

Gene Terry, which had been entrusted to Mrs. Barrau with great secrecy.

Then came the excitement of opening the largest package, which was marked, in a sprawling hand, "To my feller musher Paul Barrau, from Moose Jones." In it were two sets of harness with red, white, and blue pompons, to match the one worn by Navarre; and three strings of musical bells for the collars of each member of the team.

"Gosh, but this is great," the boy exclaimed delightedly. "The very best Christmas yet—except for your being sick, Moose."

"Well, I ain't goin' t' be sick long. I got t' git my share o' that turkey, and I can't hardly wait t' see how your dogs looks with these here high-toned fixin's on 'em." His tone was little more than a whisper.

There was a loud knock at the door. When Paul opened it he saw a fur-clad figure standing beside a loaded sled drawn by three reindeer. They had elaborate trappings of scarlet and yellow felt, and were most imposing, with magnificent spreading antlers.

"Hello, Santa Claus, come in. We didn't wait for you. Didn't know you were coming, but we're mighty glad to see you just the same."

The man pushed back the hood of his parka, revealing the face of a fine-looking Eskimo. "Not much Santa Claus; just little." His English was excellent. He held half a dozen ptarmigan, tied together, a white Arctic hare, and a mess of trout on a string. "Merry Christmas for Moose Jones. Where him?"

Paul pointed to the cot. Moose greeted the newcomer cordially. "Merry Christmas yourself, Tautuk. Where you goin'?"

"Mission at Mary's Igloo. Father Bernard fix big tree, big eat. I catch plenty presents at Shelton for kids."

"Won't you have some dinner here—with Moose?" Mrs. Barrau inquired hospitably.

"Must hurry. Everybody have to wait till I come. Pretty late now. Maybe stop to-morrow." He pulled his hood on again, and after shaking hands with them all was off with a cheery farewell.

"Fine man, Tautuk," Moose murmured. "Eddicated at the Mission, an' the best shot in the Kougarok. Makes his livin' huntin', trappin', an' fishin'. Never forgits me, neither, when he's made a good haul." His eyes fell on the things that Tautuk had brought, and his words ended in a sharp paroxysm of coughing. He sank back on the pillows. "Can't see why this pesky thing gits me. Feels like knives was stickin' through me here," he placed his hand on his chest, "and runnin' right inter my backbone. But," fearing that his remark sounded like a complaint, he continued hastily, "'tain't reely so bad. I reckon I ain't used t' babyin' myself. Lots o' folks, likely, has worse an' never chirps."

Mrs. Barrau went into her room and motioned Paul to come to her.

"I thought of asking Tautuk to stop at the Hot Springs Road House and deliver a message to Dr.

Sloane. But I remembered that Mary's Igloo was in the opposite direction; and when he said the children were waiting for their presents I hadn't the heart to suggest it. Now," with a glance toward the other room, from which came a low moan, half stifled, "I wish I had. I'm alarmed over Moose. I'm convinced he has pneumonia, and it often is hardest on big men like him."

"I'll go for the doctor right away," Paul responded eagerly. "It's no trip at all, and it's only half-past three."

"But the daylight's nearly gone." Mrs. Barrau looked out of the window into the fast deepening dusk. "And as I said before, you've never been over the trail."

"That's nothing. I'll take Dick as a leader, and he knows it as well as he knows his own name. If I start now I'll be back with the doctor by eight, anyway; maybe earlier."

Only when Mrs. Barrau saw that Moose was sinking into a stupor broken by periods of delirium did she give her consent.

Paul hitched up the dogs and adjusted the new bells to their collars. Navarre and Wolf, a strong malamute belonging to Moose, were placed in the wheel, next the sled. Hope and Hobo ahead of them, and Dick, who had been to the Hot Springs often, in front.

Leaving the team before the cabin, Paul went in to say good-bye and put on his parka and mukluks.

He added a sleeping bag to his equipment, remembering that if he grew tired he could slip into it and sit in the sled in comfort. He bent over Moose, who moved restlessly from side to side, opening his eyes when the boy spoke, but not recognizing him, and muttering disconnected sentences. "I tell you we've got t' make good. Can't let the kid slave an' fight all his life like I done. Yep, bells is cheerful, all right. That knife—pull it out; it's killin' me."

"I mustn't waste a minute," Paul said to his mother, "and you bet I'll do some hard driving. It's lucky the dogs are fresh."

Mrs. Barrau kissed him with a heavy heart. The preparations had taken some little time, and it was now after four. A strong wind had come up in the last hour, and black clouds were scudding before it. The air was chill, and the sky threatening, but as yet no snow was falling.

Paul mounted the runners and gave the order to go. Dick responded readily, and soon they were spinning down the short trail that led to the main route through the Kruzgamapa Valley.

The sound of the bells grew more and more indistinct, and through her tears Mrs. Barrau saw the team merge into the thicket of gaunt trees that fringed a frozen stream. Just before they disappeared completely, Paul waved his hand, and she could hear his faint shout. "Don't worry, Mother, everything 'll be all right."

CHAPTER FIVE

PAUL GOES FOR HELP

IN SPITE of his worry about Moose Jones, Paul was elated over his mission to the Hot Springs. At last he need no longer regard his dogs as pets, or even pals, but as real workers, necessary to the life of the Far North.

He recalled the stories that were told and retold in Nome of the valiant part dogs had played in the development of the country and in the heroic rescues of men in distress.

He remembered the night of a terrible storm when, as a little child, he had been unable to sleep because of the howling of the wind and the beating of sleet against his window. He was frightened and had gone into the living room and crept into his mother's lap as she sat reading before the fire. Then there had been

a faint sound of bells and hoarse shouts of encouragement to dogs. His mother, with tears in her eyes, had exclaimed, "It's Pete Bernard with his huskies, bringing Vernon Brewster up from Solomon. Poor soul, he was lost fifteen days and was found nearly dead from starvation and freezing. His only chance for life is here in the hospital. Pete offered to go and bring the man in; said his huskies would face *any* blizzard for him, and, thank God, they have."

Paul remembered, too, how all of Nome had thrilled over the telephone message from Dime Creek telling that Leonard Seppala and his string of staunch Siberians had carried Bobby Brown to Candle, where there were nurses and surgeons. Bobby had been injured in a sawmill; and Seppala, with his dogs, had crossed trackless wastes, had sped with him over treacherous ice and up mountain passes, with a recklessness he had never shown in the great All Alaska Sweepstakes. Then only sporting honors, a cup, and a purse awaited him; now there was a life at stake, and Seppala had won his race with death.

To him, Paul, had come the chance to show that he and his dogs could be of service to a friend in need. Not, of course, a serious matter like that of Vernon Brewster or Bobby Brown, but—his mother had said pneumonia was often most severe with strong men like Moose.

"Hi, there, Dick, get a move on you." Dick increased his speed, and the others fell into the quickened pace without difficulty.

It was rapidly growing dark, but the radiance from the snow made the broken trail visible, and the little flags on the iron stakes stood out clearly against the somber grayness of the sky. Dick, as the boy had predicted, was absolutely sure of the route.

Paul was glad that Navarre had so willingly accepted a place in the wheel. After being a leader, not every dog is so amiable over what he may regard as a slight or even an insult. There was that malamute leader of Sol Kent's, next door to the Barraus', who had sneaked into the kennel one night and killed his successor; the victim not being able to defend himself because he was tied. But Navarre was sensible; he *knew* there was some good reason for this change. That's where brains count. Like Baldy of Nome, he used his head and wasn't looking for trouble. Navarre was all right; not foolish or jealous. Some dog!

Before long there was a flurry of snow, and the darkness deepened. Dick, however, kept his even gait, and Paul watched the telephone poles and the grouped trees along the way as they went by them rapidly. They were making excellent time, and he should be back at the cabin well within the hour he had set.

As the trail approached close to the base of the mountains a strong wind swept down through a draw between two high peaks; and the snow, which had been falling softly, was now blown with great force directly upon them. It was much colder, and the boy had to turn his head to one side to let the long fur

of the wolverine ruff of his parka hood protect his face from the sting of the constant gusts.

Dick slowed up a trifle, but there was no hint of halting. They must have been on their way at least an hour, and if the storm grew no worse this delay would make but little difference.

Paul was a bit disturbed when he found that he could no longer see the willows; only the nearer flag stakes; but he knew that Dick's instinct was more dependable than his own sight, so he did not really worry. If it had not been a question of illness he would have enjoyed this new experience. Something to tell the Wonder Workers when they met in January.

It was becoming impossible to gauge their speed, for now even the flags had disappeared as they pressed steadily on. It was as if a dark blanket had hemmed them in, almost smothering them with its icy folds. Dick was only a blurred spot, moving through white flurries when the wind was lulled for a moment, to begin with renewed violence.

There was no use in calling to Dick to hurry; plainly he was doing his best. But it was a comfort to talk to Navarre, even if his voice sounded far away and strained to his own ears.

"Don't forget, pups, what Moose has done for you. Even the peachy harness you've got on, and the bells, are his Christmas present. You can let him know how much you like 'em by humping right along."

The dogs could not hear him; but anything was better than the unbroken roar of the wind. And his

words and snatches of tunes that he whistled when he could catch his breath helped to keep up his spirits. Of course, they would run out of this gale—soon. It was nothing to be afraid of; just what any guy had to go through to become a regular musher.

Shortly even the wheel dogs, close as they were to him, became mere shadowy shapes in the thickly falling flakes. It seemed as if the team was going much more slowly. That wasn't surprising. Soft snow is hard to pull through, and the crust of the trail must be already covered with the feathery drifts. He couldn't expect to make better time till they were headed into the valley again, away from the mountains.

It might be that the trail paralleled the range for some distance and that there was a succession of these openings from which the wind roared in unceasing blasts. If only he could see, but, strain his eyes as he might, they met an impenetrable veil on all sides.

Then the team stopped short, and Paul thought he heard a sharp yelp—of distress. He could not be certain. It was repeated. Yes, there was something wrong with one of the dogs. He moved ahead by steadying himself on the edge of the sled till he reached Navarre and Wolf. They stood still, panting with fatigue, but the trouble was not with them. Nor with Hope and Hobo. Dick, however, was whimpering. Paul passed his hands over the dog's body, trying to find out what was the matter. As he touched the

right shoulder there was another cry of pain. Dick must have wrenched it in some way. Paul led him a few yards, sinking to his knees at every step; and Dick, though he struggled to keep on, lay down in the snow, unable to move further.

For the first time it occurred to Paul that the situation was serious. Not for them, of course, for even with Dick disabled they would manage to push on somehow; but for Moose, who was in such need of quick help. His mother, too, would be anxious and would imagine all sorts of disasters. When he was convinced that Dick could do no more, Paul almost dragged him back to the sled and lifted him upon it, covering him with the sleeping bag.

It was not easy to change the positions of the other dogs, for he had to depend upon his sense of touch; and his fingers, even in his fur-lined gloves, were stiff with cold. At last he succeeded in fastening Navarre in the lead, leaving Hope alone in the middle, and transferring Hobo to the wheel with Wolf. It would be tough on Hope, but the stronger ones must be where the strain was most severe.

How about Navarre, though? In spite of his keen instinct at finding and keeping a trail, the instinct of which Sam Milton had boasted so proudly, would he be able to do this in the dark, when everything was covered with fresh snow, and in a new country? And what if there were several trails that met? How could a dog strange to the neighborhood, even one of Navarre's intelligence, know which one to choose?

These were questions that crowded into Paul's mind insistently; and while he was pondering over them, Navarre, who had started off with enthusiasm a few moments before, slackened his gait and then paused as if in doubt of the next move.

Again Paul felt his way carefully past the others and stood by the leader, his hand on the dog's head.

"I'll bet that's just what's happened. Here's where some other trail hits the main one. If we could only see the mountains we'd take the one away from them. Gosh, but this is bad business!" He peered in all directions. Not an outline, not a landmark. Just the thick curtain of falling snow and empty blackness beyond.

Paul remembered hearing often, from experienced mushers, that in case of losing your way in a storm it was best to stop while you were still on a trail; not to wander at random. Then, when the storm was over, you knew where you were. Well, that would be all right if you weren't going for a doctor, but it wouldn't do now. No, sir! You'd just *have* to go on. Even if you took the wrong trail, it would end some place where there were bound to be people. Perhaps one of these led to Shelton or to Mary's Igloo, where Father Bernard would be. He was almost as good as a doctor—he'd taken care of so many sick Eskimos. You couldn't stand here, anyway. You'd freeze.

Should they go to the right or the left? It was all a chance, and maybe they'd be lucky. Moose Jones believed in the Luck of the Trail. He'd said so, often.

He even said it was part of the Sweepstakes victories; one third the driver, one third the dogs, and the rest the Luck of the Trail. They'd have to trust to it now.

"Gee, Navarre. Mush!" They were off once more, but at a slow pace. Navarre strained in his harness and floundered in the drifts. The others followed willingly, but with an effort. Paul was not impatient, for he fully realized that they were giving all the strength that was in them.

Twice the sled blew over, and the dogs stopped while he righted it and lifted Dick back into it. His arms and legs were growing numb. If he stepped off the runners and trotted behind the sled it might help to keep his blood in circulation. He took care, however, not to loosen his hold on the handlebars. It wouldn't do to let the dogs get away from him for a moment; they could barely hear him as it was, when he shouted at the top of his voice. He'd hang on as long as his fingers could grip the bars; they were worse than ever now; then he'd get into the sled with Dick. But that would be just so much more weight for the others to pull. No, he'd stick it out a while yet. This darned blizzard *couldn't* last so very much longer.

He wondered what time it was. Must be getting late; his watch was in his other clothes. It didn't make any difference; couldn't see the face if he had it. Anyway, they were making all the speed that was possible, and they *must* be near the Springs or the Igloo or some cabin. There were lots of cabins in the valley; Moose had said so.

In spite of Paul's extreme discomfort, he felt drowsy. That wouldn't do. When you begin to freeze you always feel sleepy. Dan Kelly told him once about a man who tied his team to a telegraph pole, when they couldn't go any farther, and then walked around them all night, as fast as he could, to keep from freezing to death. You have to fight sleep. If you don't—— But he'd better not think of that. He wasn't so awful sleepy; he was like this when he'd been in the open air. It didn't really mean anything. He'd crawl into the sled and try to warm up; then he'd be ready to get out and push again.

The next time the dogs rested, as they were forced to do frequently, Paul shoved Dick to one side, and crept into the sleeping bag. He couldn't draw up the cord at the mouth and tie it; there was a knot, and his fingers wouldn't work. The wind cut through his furs like knife thrusts; just like the stabs Moose felt in his chest. It was fierce. Poor old Moose.

Paul rubbed his hands together vigorously; they tingled and pricked, but were no warmer. Besides, while lying down he felt more of a desire for sleep. It was all a guy could do to keep his eyes open. The dogs were lying down, too. He'd have to get up and yell to them. This was no time for any of them to quit on the job—why, it was almost the last lap. Another spurt and they'd get help. Someone to go to Moose, a fresh team, something to eat. That was all they needed. Grub always bucks you up. That turkey was swell—he wished he'd eaten more of it.

He wished, also, he had brought something for the dogs; at least a dried salmon apiece. Matt Lawson down at the Allan and Darling Kennel said you should always be ready for any kind of a deal; and Matt was no slouch on dog dope.

The Sweepstakes drivers carry blankets and little Canton flannel mukluks for the dogs' feet in case they have to go through ice, and green veils for the dogs' eyes if there is a glare from the sun. The sun! He looked up at the inky sky. Well, there was no danger from that in December in the Arctic, when there's not much more than three hours of daylight at best. It was only in spring you needed veils. But the fish and the blankets—and some chocolate for himself. That would have been keen. But he'd left in such a hurry; hadn't even had time to think of a flashlight or matches. Pretty bum trailsman; he'd a lot to learn. Even on a short mush, you ought to take such things; even for an hour or two. Never could tell what might happen.

Was it midnight? It seemed to the boy he had been moving for ages. Maybe that was because it had been nearly dark at four, when they had started. Always seems longer when you can't see and there's nothing to do but think up scary things that might happen if you got lost—things that raise gooseflesh all over you. But then they weren't really lost. If they'd taken the wrong trail, where they branched, they could turn back and go the other way, and they'd be all right. He guessed they'd better do that; the country was

growing rougher—he'd been bumped off the sled three times—and they were on an up grade. That was queer, for both the Igloo and the Hot Springs were on the level floor of the valley. If they were headed for the mountains, the farther they went the worse off they'd be.

He was so tired he could barely move; so were the dogs. His head was nodding. After a short rest, though, they'd all be full of pep and could double back on their trail in no time. The wind was less strong here; it was as good a place as any for their stop.

Once more he went up beside the gasping dogs and unhooked them so that they could lie down more comfortably. Poor pups—they sure had been wonders! They dropped instantly on the snow, and the boy crept into the sleeping bag. Hard work, with all your muscles sore, bones aching, and your hands and feet like lumps of ice that didn't belong to the rest of your body at all.

The little nap 'd pull them together. Not more 'n half an hour, though. What was it Dan Kelly said? Oh, yes; that the lost man had to walk all night to keep from sleeping. You must fight it; but he must have meant a *long* sleep. Maybe it 'd be better not to sleep at all. Just close your eyes because they smarted from the ice that had blown into 'em. Felt like cinders—scratchy; and those knives in your lungs, the same kind, again, that Moose had. Maybe they'd stop hurting so bad if you could breathe warmer air. Just for a little while—worth trying.

If only the dogs could be in the bag with him. But they had thick coats, and they wouldn't suffer; not so very much. They'd burrow deep in the snow, out of the wind; and in fifteen minutes they'd all be ready to start again. Navarre sure was a bully leader—he'd take them through. Wasn't the dog's fault if they'd gone wrong. It was his own—Paul's. He'd said "Gee," and Navarre had come "gee." He'd say, "Haw," next time, and then they'd reach the doctor. His mother needn't worry—they were all right . . . all right . . . only . . .

When Paul awoke it was no longer dark; the gale had died down, and the snow had ceased falling. There was no sun, however, by which he might tell the time; just the weird grayness of a midwinter day in the Far North.

For an instant he was puzzled. He could not figure out where he was; then it all came back to him. He had crept into his sleeping bag to get warm, going for Dr. Sloane, and had closed his eyes for a few moments. But hours must have passed since then; the storm was over, and it was morning. Or was it afternoon? There was no way of knowing.

Inch by inch he drew himself out of the bag; still so stiff that he could hardly move. Where were the dogs? About him were small white mounds like graves. He shivered. Four, five. Yes, Dick had dug in, too. Of course, they had buried themselves as a protection against the biting wind. He knew they would.

"Navarre, Hope, Hobo . . ." He called to them as

loudly as he could, but they did not stir. It was bitterly cold—colder even than during the blizzard. Could they have frozen to death? Paul's heart almost stopped beating. Then Navarre, shaking off the white blanket of snow, rose and came toward the boy, wagging his tail feebly. The others roused themselves and pressed close to him. Their feet were covered with clots of congealed blood. There must have been sharp rocks or jagged ice on the trail last night. They winced when he touched their paws, but let him examine them carefully. Pretty bad shape, but at that they'd have to go on; they'd lost too much time here as it was.

Through the dimness he could now distinguish blurred outlines of cliffs that towered on three sides, with a narrow pass leading out of the fourth toward what seemed like a vast, unbroken plain. They must have come through this pass from the valley; straight away from their destination.

Perhaps if he were higher he could look beyond the rolling drifts that shut off the view and discover buildings. If he couldn't, they were lost. At last he admitted it: lost was right. He had no idea where they might be nor how long it had taken them to get there. It was up to him to get out of this tight fix. What would his mother and Moose be thinking?

Quite near were some huge boulders, piled one on another. From the highest point he'd be able to see a lot farther, and the climb would be easy if only he could limber up.

He walked over to them and began a slow ascent, Navarre following close at his heels. "Good old sport—stick to a guy no matter what happens!"

Several times Paul slipped back. He could not get a firm hold, for the ice had made the rocks like glass, and those darned hands of his might as well be made of wood. No grip at all.

At last, however, he was at the summit, looking eagerly through the entrance to the canyon. There was nothing to be seen but the same trackless wastes stretching away to the misty horizon.

He was utterly discouraged. Then it came to him that the long spurs of the mountains might hide a cabin, or even a settlement, from view.

Surely he had come over some sort of a trail, and no one broke trails in such a country as this for the fun of it. They'd have to get out of this pocket first; and then maybe around the corner, to the left or the right, there'd be a shack with smoke curling from a chimney. A prospector's shack, likely, and he'd have dogs and take the message on to the Springs, while he could rest his team.

Paul started down with renewed hope. Frequently he was obliged to grasp Navarre's collar to steady himself. Almost at the bottom he clutched a small projection which gave way, and he plunged down; landing on some snow-covered rocks below. For a moment he was stunned; then tried to rise, but dropped back groaning. He felt as if every bone in his body must be smashed, it hurt so to move. Na-

varre waited patiently beside him. Gradually the boy straightened himself a little and attempted to throw his right arm over Navarre's back. It hung useless, broken or sprained. But with his left arm he pulled himself to a kneeling position, and then to his feet, stumbling back to the sled. Sitting on the edge of it, he regarded the dogs despairingly. When they started off he'd have to ride; he couldn't hold the handlebars with one arm, on that rough trail. Would they be able to pull him?

And the paralyzing cold again. He couldn't even think. Things were spinning before him—turning black. Maybe he was going to faint. But only girls and women fainted. Gosh, but he'd hate to admit to the Wonder Workers that he'd keeled over like a girl, when it was up to him to . . . it was because his head was queer . . . never like this before. He'd crawl into the furs. This time he wouldn't let himself go to sleep. He'd even say the multiplication tables to keep from it; or some French poetry his mother had made him learn; or talk to the dogs as if they were people—that 'd be better. "Navarre, Hope, Hobo, Wolf—you're all in, too. Good pups, though. . . ." They crouched close to the sled, motionless. Navarre's muzzle was pressed into the bag, and a bloodstained foot pawed at Paul's breast.

His mother, Moose Jones, the young Frenchman, René Haas, all jumbled up in his mind. Funny, his grandfather, the old count, was telling Dan Kelly about the dungeons under the walls of the château

in Alsace, while he fed cookies to Tim Neal's Prince. Black Mart was throwing poisoned fish to Hope, on Slick Turner's grave. And there was King Henry of Navarre, at the head of an army, with his white plumes waving. Navarre, his own leader, had white plumes, too. No, they weren't plumes—just pompons that used to be red, white and blue, for America and France. But now they were white with frost and so hard they couldn't wave. He'd brush it off—but Navarre wasn't there any longer. He was moving away, toward the opening of the gorge.

Paul called desperately, "Don't go, Navarre; don't leave me." But although the dog turned and hesitated at the sound of his master's voice, he went on and on steadily.

With a sob Paul watched the great wolf-gray form with the white cockade grow smaller and smaller and then disappear in the dim mists beyond the cliffs.

Navarre had deserted him.

CHAPTER SIX

NAVARRE RETURNS ALONE

WHEN Mrs. Barrau saw Paul disappear down the trail she wondered if it had not been a mistake to let him go. Tautuk had said he would stop at the cabin the next day, on his way home from Mary's Igloo, and would undoubtedly have been glad then to go for the doctor. But when she listened to Moose Jones's labored breathing and watched him toss about in delirium she knew she would have been very unhappy if she had prevented the boy's going to save herself from anxiety.

After all, he was probably right. Ten miles was not much of a journey, with Dick's experience as a leader. It was only that she still regarded Paul as hardly more than a child. Yet he had the strength and stature of an average man and the self-confidence that comes

early in a country where life is none too easy at the best.

After doing what was necessary for Moose, she busied herself about the house: keeping up the fires and preparing a supper that could be quickly heated when Paul returned with Dr. Sloane. There was plenty of wood in the shed by the kitchen door: he had seen to that, and had also left a big bucket of food to be given to the dogs that were left, at six o'clock. Moose was in the habit of feeding his team lightly in the morning and allowing them a bountiful meal at night after their work was done, when they could rest and digest it easily.

By the light of a lantern she filled several pans with the cooked corn meal and salmon and watched the dogs as they ate it with much relish. She saved enough for those Paul had taken; they would need it when they came back. And Paul would be very hungry, too; for she felt that he would not linger at the Springs any longer than was absolutely necessary. Perhaps only long enough to drink hot coffee while Dr. Sloane was making his preparations for the trip.

Occasionally Moose roused himself to ask thickly, "Where's the kid?"

"He's out; he'll be back soon."

The answer seemed to satisfy him, and he would drop again into a restless sleep.

While Mrs. Barrau was in the shed she opened the door and looked out. It was snowing hard, and a

strong wind was blowing. By this time, if Paul had figured correctly, he must have arrived at his destination; but even if he had not, wind and snow would mean nothing to Dick and the other dogs who were accustomed to being out in all kinds of weather.

She went back into the living room and took up a bit of sewing. She found, however, that her mind was dwelling on disagreeable possibilities; she had heard so many dreadful stories of people lost in these Kougarok storms. She must not think of them. Picking up a book, she read a few pages without being able to catch the thread; then laid it on the table and went to the window. The snow, driven by the force of the wind, was sifting in the cracks about the panes. It must be a real blizzard by now.

The hands of the clock pointed to eight. Paul would be back by nine at the very latest, he had said. Only one more hour to wait. She drew the heavy denim curtains over the windows to keep out the drafts that penetrated even through the double casements. How bitter it must be outside. She looked in the corner where Paul's clothes were hanging on pegs. Yes, he had taken his sweater, and a drill parka to place over his fur one if he needed it; and she remembered he had also laid the sleeping bag in the sled. He would be well protected. She would try not to worry; but there was a lump in her throat as she pictured her son facing those icy blasts on an unknown trail.

She changed the plaster on Moose's chest and held

some soup to his lips, urging him to drink it. He pushed the cup away feebly. "Can't swaller. Them there knives—goin' through me agin."

By midnight Mrs. Barrau could no longer ignore the dread that was taking possession of her. There was just one comforting thought, to which she clung desperately. It might be that Dr. Sloane and others at the Springs had decided, upon Paul's arrival, that they would wait till the blizzard abated before they started back for the Jones cabin. No time would be gained by floundering through deep drifts in the dark; and when early morning came they would be on their way. That *must* be it.

With this hope uppermost, she even slept a little at intervals, only to wake and find herself listening intently for the sound of voices or bells.

Remembering the drawn curtains, she pulled them aside and placed a lamp on a table before the front window. A light should be shining there in case anyone came near enough to see it; if, indeed, it *could* be seen through the thick fall of snow. There might be another wayfarer than Paul abroad, and she must consider such a possibility, however remote.

The hours dragged by so slowly that she thought the clock must have stopped. It was still ticking when she took it in her hands, but she wound it so that they could keep track of the time. At last she was relieved to find that the snow had almost ceased and the wind had gone down. The utter darkness gave way to a sullen gray, which gradually brightened till she

could see the outline of the willows by the main trail. It was nine o'clock in the morning, and the sun, if it should break through the clouds, would not come up over the mountains till after eleven. But at least it was now daylight, and the men from the Springs would take advantage of that at once.

Moose was better, which cheered her. His breathing was more regular, the fever seemed broken, and his mind no longer wandered, though he lay very still and rarely spoke.

In case the team left the Hot Springs by nine, it should be here by twelve, however bad the route. Mrs. Barrau tried to look at the matter from all angles, making every allowance for natural delays; but at noon, when there was still no sign of their coming, a feeling of hopelessness was fast overcoming her usual optimism.

While Moose was dozing she put on her furs and mukluks and slipped outside. She figured that she might be able to reach the main trail and fasten a note to one of the stakes. By tying a bright scarf above it, the attention of any passer-by would be attracted. It was a faint chance, but not one to be overlooked.

She sank to her knees at every step through the snow, breathless from the effort and stung by the deadly cold that had followed the storm. She had made but a few yards when she realized that her idea was impossible. So, too, was that of using the other dogs in the kennel, since she could neither harness

nor drive them, and there was no leader among those that were left.

She entered the living room again, her face white and set. Moose turned at the soft closing of the door. "Is Paul here yit?"

Mrs. Barrau, in spite of her attempt to be brave, broke down completely. There was no further use in trying to deceive him. With his mind clear and his constant questions, the truth must be told.

"My God!" Moose exclaimed when she had finished. "And that poor kid went fer the doctor fer me. I'd ruther 've passed in my checks than hev him out sich a night." Then, noting Mrs. Barrau's despair, he added, "'Cause you're so scared, mostly. *He'll* be all right. Old Dick ain't no airyplane fer speed, but you can't no more turn him offen a trail he knows he's t' take then you cud git a locomotive offen the track. An' that there trail t' the Hot Springs is his fav'rite prommernade. The cook gives him bones, an' him an' me goes t' the mat frequent when I'm aimin' t' go somewheres else where he ain't treated so generous. No, m'am, don't you do no more worryin'. Dick's got Paul there, O.K., an' they're on the way back now."

"Oh, Moose, you don't know what a terrible blizzard it was."

"Well, a blizzard makes no never-minds t' them babies o' mine. They was brung up on 'em." Moose chuckled hoarsely, but there was an anxious frown on his face. "They ain't much on style, but they got the

guts t' tackle any weather, an' that's what counts in the long run."

"But there were only two of your dogs, and Paul's three are strange to this neighborhood."

"Yep, but don't forgit it's the leader that does the thinkin' fer the rest; they jest follers him without no back talk. Why, you couldn't lose Dick in this here neck o' the woods ef you was t' blindfold him, turn him round three times, and face him wrong. He'd jest nacherly light out fer the Springs, 'less he was ordered diff'rent."

The words brought comfort to Mrs. Barrau. "Then you really think everything is all right—that they just waited till daylight to start back?"

"Sure. They're apt t' turn up any minit now."

But the minutes passed till another hour had gone by; and still Mrs. Barrau, at the window, had nothing to report.

The situation demanded more explanations and more excuses, which Moose made with apparent sincerity, though the troubled expression in his eyes deepened, and his attitude was one of strained listening.

"You see," he remarked, "Paul's sled might 'a' got busted; er mebbe them dogs o' hisn had t' rest. They're pretty soft yit. Mine's tough ez nails."

"But Dr. Sloane drove up from Nome. They could use his team."

"Lots o' men drives up, an' ef they're plannin' t' stay a spell send their teams right back. Dog feed's

high up here; has t' be hauled from town. Twelve cents a pound agin five cents. An' there ain't much kennel space at the Springs. There's plenty o' good reasons why they ain't got home." He sat up suddenly. "I jest can't lay here thinkin' 'bout them, though. I'm goin' t' dress an' hitch up the rest o' the dogs an' light out myself. There's bound t' be a lot o' fellers at the Road House, an' it won't be no time before we round up the kid. Wherever he is he'll be on the watch fer someone t' turn up, now the storm's stopped."

Mrs. Barrau was almost distracted. She realized that Moose was far too weak to make the trip; yet if he did not go no one would know that Paul was missing. Perhaps not for two or three days. She went again to the window, not knowing what to say or do in the matter. Then she exclaimed eagerly, "Someone's coming. It doesn't look like a dog team—no, reindeer. It's Tautuk!"

She dashed to the door and waited while they came through the willows toward the cabin. "Tautuk," she called as soon as he was near enough to hear her, "did you see my son anywhere—did you go to the Springs?"

Tautuk looked puzzled. "See nobody. Not go to Springs. Come from Igloo; no one on trail." He snubbed the end of his sled against a corner of the house and entered hurriedly.

Mrs. Barrau explained the situation, her tone trembling with emotion and disappointment.

Moose hardly allowed her to finish before he asked, "Kin you go to the Springs right away, Tautuk? Deer pretty fresh?"

The Eskimo nodded. "Plenty fresh, plenty fast. Go now, tell everybody, catch boy quick."

"And will you bring Dr. Sloane back here?" Mrs. Barrau glanced apprehensively at Moose, who, after another violent attack of coughing, was leaning against his pillows, exhausted.

"Nothin' doin', Tautuk," he said, when he could catch his breath. "You tell the Doc t' scurry round with the rest of 'em, an' never mind me. Then you kin come back here, in case Paul turns up, so 's we cud let 'em know of it, an' they wouldn't be runnin' in circles after him. They might try the edge o' the mountains fust an' look in them draws. That's where it's easiest t' git rattled. They're ez much alike ez pease in a pod. But how old Dick——" He shook his head, and muttered to himself, "I don't jest figger Dick. He allers gits t' the place he's aimin' at, straight ez a shot outen a gun."

Tautuk was off again in a few minutes at a swift pace; and while Mrs. Barrau's anxiety as to Paul's safety was not relieved, she felt at least that something would be done toward finding him.

"Do you think Paul is suffering very much—from cold and hunger?" she asked Moose, her voice almost inaudible with the fear of what might have happened.

"No," he replied reassuringly. "You kin live days without eatin' ef you have to. Ain't pleasant, but kin

be done. You say he had his fur an' drill parkas an' a sleepin' bag? Why, a feller 'd be cozy at the North Pole with all that there truck on him; an' I'll bet him an' his dogs is all cuddled up this minit, hevin' their beauty sleep. Jest too doggoned tuckered out t' move along. He didn't hev his watch?"

"No, I found it in the pocket of the suit he left."

"Well, with this here half light all day I reckon he's jest 'bout stretchin' hisself an' thinkin' it's almost time t' git up. You know how sound a kid sleeps."

"He said that he'd not waste a moment; so surely he'd not stop to sleep unless—unless——" She could not bring herself to say what was in her mind, for she, too, knew that sleep is the hardest thing to combat when one is freezing. Freezing! That terrible hazard of the Northern Trail that often overtakes even the hardiest mushers. And Paul was so young and so unused to the danger of an Arctic storm.

Moose seemed to understand her unspoken thoughts and continued as if in answer to them. "Paul's got a heap more endurance 'n most boys of his age. I will say fer them Wonder Workers, they keep theirselves in mighty good shape with their trainin'. Messin' with punchin' bags an' things, I used t' kinda laugh when I seen 'em out on the tundra last summer chasin' round in bare legs an' little white panties an' under-shirts without no sleeves. Paul said they was track meets. I reckon they knowed what they was doin' all right; hardens 'em up a lot. He'll be good 's new when he gits the stiff'nin' outen his jints an' is fed up."

Again and again, though she knew it was too early to expect Tautuk back, Mrs. Barrau went to the window, seeing nothing but the wide stretch of snow broken by the leafless willows and growing more and more dreary as the day shortened.

At his request, she placed the clock on the table where Moose could watch it. Together they counted the least possible time in which the Eskimo and his deer could reach the Springs and return.

The cold became more intense toward evening, but it was windless, and the sky was clear. Mrs. Barrau looked at the thermometer, hanging just outside the shed. It was forty degrees below zero, she told Moose, when he questioned her. After that they spoke but little. Every comforting thing he could think of had already been said over and over; now there was nothing to do but wait for Tautuk with the hope of news and the assurance that by this time men were out scouring the country for Paul.

Mrs. Barrau sat tense and motionless before the stove, her hands clenched tightly in her lap, and her eyes fixed on the clock.

"Did you hear anything, Moose?" There was a sound of scratching or tapping and a faint tinkle, it seemed to her. Before he could answer, she ran to the door and threw it open, giving a cry of mingled relief and fear.

Navarre dragged himself in, and going directly to Moose, placed a bleeding paw upon the couch, his

eyes meeting those of the man in a mute, beseeching message.

"Oh, Moose," Mrs. Barrau groaned, as she dropped on her knees beside the dog, her arms about his neck, "he's trying to tell us something—where Paul is—what has happened. Do you think——" She hesitated.

Moose looked Navarre over quickly. His feet were caked with frozen blood, and there were signs of severe frostbite on his flanks. He was panting and plainly exhausted, as if he had come far and with great effort.

"Paul unhooked him. Means they was resting somewheres. An' Navarre seen his chanct t' come fer help an' lit out fer the only place he knowed hereabouts. It's sure heartenin', fer now we kin go straight t' the kid without no globe trottin'. Paul's ez good ez found."

Dread tortured the mother that he might be found frozen, or, at best, ill from exposure. But she did not mention her thoughts to Moose, who was so elated over the dog's return that he could see nothing but a bright side to the situation.

Bringing a pan of food into the living room, Mrs. Barrau watched Navarre while he ate it ravenously. Then, after carefully washing his feet with warm water, she rubbed salve into the cuts and wrapped them in soft gauze and cotton. He struggled and whined, trying to free himself. "Poor Navarre," she

said gently, "it hurts, but you'll feel better in a little while."

"That ain't it. He wouldn't mind the hurt, but he wants t' git out. See how he keeps goin' toward the door. He don't understand us not startin' with him right away. If I was only up it wouldn't take me long, I kin tell you, t' play foller this here leader."

As he spoke the jingle of bells came to them. "Tautuk," Mrs. Barrau said excitedly, as she went again to the window. "And Dr. Sloane's with him."

In another moment the doctor and Tautuk were there; and while Mrs. Barrau told them about Navarre, Dr. Sloane examined Moose Jones.

"Close shave. You almost had pneumonia. Only good nursing saved you from it. A few more days in the house and you'll be on the mend."

"In the house nothin'," Moose remarked firmly. "I'm goin' t' climb inter my clothes now, put on everythin' but the kitchen stove, an' go with Tautuk."

"Impossible," the doctor replied. "You'd be flat on your back, and next time you might not be so lucky. I'll go myself."

Tautuk, however, ended the argument. "Me go alone. Dog he ride in sled; show me way. Me born in valley; know every place. Maybe must put two, three dogs in sled with boy. Too much people, too much dogs, make deer too tired. No pull."

"I reckon Tautuk's right," Moose admitted reluctantly. "Extry weight 'd slow him up consid'able,

an' his team's done a tidy day's work already. He turned to the Eskimo. "They must 'a' went a good piece on the main road before somethin' happened t' switch 'em. You couldn't rattle old Dick so's he leave the trail, even in a storm. He might 'a' laid down in his tracks ef the goin' was too thick. He's so doggoned wise, likely he'd say t' the others, 'Well, fellers, here I am, an' here I stays till the blow's over an' I kin see my way and toddle along, safe an' sound.' But," thoughtfully, "ef he'd done that you'd 'a' met up with 'em. I was tellin' Mrs. Barrau I can't figger out jest what *did* happen; but you kin take my word fer it, Dick wasn't t' blame none."

"Dick very good leader." Tautuk grinned. "Pretty near good like my deer, Coke Hill, Scotty, Seppala." There was usually a discussion in regard to the merits of deer and dogs whenever Moose and the Eskimo met. But it was a good-natured dispute, though neither was able to convince the other on the points of speed and endurance. "Maybe Dick get hurt. Maybe get sick."

"More likely than his gittin' lost. An' you kin take Navarre's say-so when you come t' the place they went wrong. There'll be a full moon, now it ain't snowin', an' you won't hev no trouble seein' where you're at."

When Mrs. Barrau and the doctor followed Tautuk to the door, Navarre seemed to realize that at last his message had been understood and showed every possible sign of joy. He hobbled to the sled as fast as

his bandaged feet would permit and jumped on the sleeping bag.

Mrs. Barrau tucked a lynx robe about him. "You'll need these extra covers, Tautuk. Paul's been out in this terrible cold over twenty-four hours, and he's not used to it. The poor dogs, too——" Her voice was trembling, and she wiped the tears from her eyes. "Just a moment," she added, as she went hurriedly into the kitchen and returned with a flashlight and a thermos bottle filled with strong, hot broth. "Give Paul this and tell him—tell him——" She could not finish.

Tautuk nodded sympathetically. "Me tell him everything all right here. Moose good. You not be scared any more. Find him plenty quick now."

At a word from him the reindeer set out at an even pace; and Mrs. Barrau and the doctor went into the house, cheered by Tautuk's confident words.

Bright moonlight flooded the valley, the high mountains that rimmed it standing black and rugged against the starlit sky.

Tautuk and his team were tired. It had been a long, hard pull through the soft snow from Mary's Igloo to the Jones cabin and then to the Springs and back. But Tautuk had given no hint of his fatigue, for he was fully aware of the danger to which the boy had been exposed and of the terrible anxiety of the boy's mother and his friend Moose Jones. He did not, however, urge his deer to any great speed. It was important that they should hold out; and it was still

uncertain how much more of a demand might be made on their strength.

Over an hour passed. Navarre lay quiet but alert, and Tautuk noticed that he held his head high and sniffed the air from time to time. At last he sat up and began to bark.

The Eskimo halted and looked about him carefully. He remembered that the trail divided at this spot; one branch running to an abandoned mining claim at the base of the Sawtooth Range. This was occasionally used by prospectors and had evidently been taken by Paul's leader.

To test Navarre, Tautuk went a few yards to the right. The dog almost fell out of the sled in his haste to show that the move was a mistake. He limped back, still barking insistently and waiting for Tautuk to return.

"Good," the man said approvingly. "You speak pretty plain talk for a dog. Get in."

Navarre obeyed, and they were off again. It was but a short time before they came to the mountains. Three distinct cuts, almost parallel, ran into the rugged cliffs that edged the Kruzgamapa Valley. By contrast with the brilliant moonlight in the open plains, these looked like yawning black caverns reaching back into infinite space. To Tautuk, however, they held no terror of uncertainty or mystery. He had hunted in them since childhood and knew that in spite of their apparent depth they were less than half a mile in length and but a few hundred yards wide.

It could be only a few minutes more before Paul Barrau would be found, if Navarre made the right choice.

Even Tautuk, who had the phlegmatic temperament of his race, was dismayed at the possibilities that confronted him. He had, in the cheery warmth of Mary's Igloo, listened to the howling blizzard the night before, and had been glad that he and his deer were sheltered from such a storm. And Paul was only a boy—not a trailsman. He called to his team to hurry. Their search was nearly over.

Navarre, who had again jumped from his comfortable place on the furs and was limping ahead of the deer, chose the middle cut with no hesitation. At the entrance Tautuk left his team and proceeded on foot.

The shadows had lessened as the moon rose higher, so that Navarre could be clearly seen making for a huge mass of rocks, covered with snow, against which a dark spot was visible. Barking with excitement, the dog, in spite of his injuries, was there before Tautuk, pawing at the shapeless burden in the sled in frantic appeal. Three small mounds were close by. The other dogs—living or dead? Tautuk wondered.

He gently pushed Navarre aside, and snapping on the flash given him by Mrs. Barrau, peered down anxiously, dreading what might meet his sight.

Paul Barrau was lying absolutely motionless, and over his body Hope crouched, the warmth of her thick coat protecting him from the stabs of bitter cold that penetrated even into the depths of the sleeping bag.

She was licking the boy's face wistfully. Then, at a word, she crept from her place, her long vigil at an end.

Hobo, Dick, and Wolf, roused by the stir about them, crawled from their chill covering and stiffly shook themselves.

The Eskimo felt hastily beneath Paul's parka. The heart was beating, and in the utter stillness he could detect faint, irregular breaths.

They were in time. At last the closed lids fluttered, and Paul opened his eyes, gazing into Tautuk's face in bewilderment.

"The doctor—where—Moose——" he muttered almost inaudibly.

"Doctor with Moose. Lady all right. Now catch you. Not talk; pretty soon go."

He filled a cup with the broth from the thermos bottle; but before he could hold it to Paul's lips Navarre, at the sound of the boy's voice, leaped into the sled beside his master.

"Him go tell Moose how can find you," Tautuk explained.

Paul, with a sob, pressed his cheek to the dog's muzzle, and his groping hand touched the pompon on the collar. It glittered in the moonlight, still white with frost. Paul sank back, his ice-rimmed eyes closing again, but his numb hand resting on the gallant plume of Navarre—his Navarre of the North.

CHAPTER SEVEN

“NAVARRE’S GITTIN’ THE LIFE- SAVIN’ HABIT”

TAUTUK raised Paul Barrau in his arms so that he could drink a little of the broth; but after a mouthful, which he swallowed with much difficulty, the boy sank back on the furs exhausted. Moans of agony came from his stiff blue lips, as the Eskimo began a brisk rubbing till the blood was circulating freely in the very tips of the numb fingers and toes. Then the cheeks and ears which had been fairly well protected by the wolverine ruff of the parka hood were chafed vigorously.

Finally Tautuk was satisfied with his work and commenced his preparations for the return trip. He carefully looked over the dogs, who stood huddled together in a pitiful little group, plainly showing the

ordeal through which they had passed. They were all more or less frostbitten, and, in addition to this, Dick's shoulder was severely wrenched.

Tautuk gave a shrill whistle. "My deer all same your dogs," he explained. "Like me very much; come when I call."

The boy did not hear.

In a few moments the deer appeared; an imposing trio, with their strong bodies and their huge antlers outlined sharply against the clear sky. The Eskimo went forward and led them to the place where Paul was lying. They were suspicious of dogs, having been chased by them often; and once Coke had been attacked by a band of roving malamutes and rescued only after he had been badly mutilated. It was Tautuk's reassuring voice and firm hand alone that made them willing to come so close to their natural enemies.

Navarre and Hope ignored them, content to be beside Paul; but Wolf and Hobo bristled and growled suggestively, disturbed by the approach of these formidable beasts whose horns and hoofs the bravest must respect, or even fear.

Dick, however, as befits a leader who is expected to mind his own affairs, turned his back upon the intruders to wait for the next move, which might be of more interest to him.

Paul's sled was quickly attached by Tautuk to his own, as a trailer; and into it he gently lifted Dick, Hobo, and Wolf, covering them with one of the robes. Navarre lay by the sleeping bag in the other sled,

his head thrust under the flap, where he could feel Paul. Hope curled herself contentedly in the bow.

The Eskimo gave the signal for his team to start. They were now very tired, having gone well over fifty miles since they had left the Igloo, with practically no rest. He was sorry for them, for they still had many miles more to cover; but he was proud of their endurance and their willingness.

Almost worn out himself with the physical effort and mental strain of the past hours, he stood wearily on the runners, shouting encouragement to the deer as they plodded along on the hard trail.

"Hi there, Coke—hi, Sep—hi, Scotty. Little more go, eat plenty kow-kow. Catch big sleep. Show Moose Jones' lay-down pups you more better. Hi, Hi!"

At last the willows that marked the approach to the Jones cabin were in sight, and then the lights from the windows.

Mrs. Barrau, listening intently for the first sound of bells, rushed to the door with Dr. Sloane and watched the slow coming of the team. She was rigid with fear of the news that might greet her; but when Tautuk saw her he waved cheerily. "All right—boy—dogs—everybody."

Moose had risen as hastily as his weakness permitted, and followed the others in spite of their protests. He leaned against the door, quite unable to help the doctor and Tautuk as they carried Paul's unconscious form across the room to a cot.

Mrs. Barrau hovered over her son with a feeling

of both relief and dread. He was with them again, but how serious was his condition? He was ghastly, blue-white, with ice clinging to his hair and eyelashes and his lips cracked and swollen. He had not stirred, even when she had called his name repeatedly.

Dr. Sloane's examination was rapid but thorough. Such a case as this was an old story to him. "Not so bad," he announced. "He'll come out of it."

As Mrs. Barrau assisted him in removing Paul's clothes she asked breathlessly, "Then you think—you're sure—that there's no real danger?"

"None whatever," the doctor replied confidently.

"He'll not lose any fingers or toes—from gangrene?" She remembered such disastrous things occurred sometimes from freezing.

"He was found too soon for that; and Tautuk did a good job with his massage. Paul will probably suffer a lot, but he won't be injured permanently."

Once the boy opened his eyes. They brightened as they fell on his mother and Moose Jones. Then, as Dr. Sloane bent above him he groaned and muttered almost inaudibly, "Not me—Dick. Hurt, poor old——"

The doctor nodded. "Dick next; don't fret. He's better off than you this minute." He motioned toward Dick who, with Navarre, had slipped in before the door was closed and was huddled against the chair into which Moose had dropped when he had been really convinced of Paul's safety.

"Navarre—all—all——"

"Yes, all. And Navarre's here right beside you. Couldn't pull him away with a grappling hook. But don't try to talk now." The doctor opened a case he had brought and took from it some powders. "To make him sleep. He needs it; he's going to have rather a tough time the next few days. I think we'd better take him into the bedroom, where he won't be disturbed. Tautuk 'll lend a hand."

The Eskimo, who had been feeding his deer with the moss that he always carried for them, came in; and between them Paul was made as easy as possible. He did not speak while he was being bandaged, but occasionally winced, as if in great pain.

When the doctor and Tautuk returned to the living room they found that Mrs. Barrau had prepared breakfast.

"Tautuk," she said brokenly, "how can I ever thank you for what you have done? But for you Paul might have——"

"Not much I do. Father Bernard over at Mission, he say, 'Boys, always try help when folks got troubles. You help, you get good feel inside. Outside feel not matter.'"

"Well, Tautuk, if you're thawed out so's your teeth 'll work, Mrs. Barrau's ready t' add somethin' extry t' that there good feel you already got in your inside from doin' a darned fine thing fer all us folks. Hungry?"

"You bet. Eat dry fish like dogs—moss like deer. Plenty hungry." Tautuk laughed as he drew up a

chair to the table. When he had finished the meal the gray dawn was creeping in through the windows.

Mrs. Barrau suggested that he try to sleep and give his team their deserved rest. He was to occupy Paul's couch, while Mrs. Barrau and the doctor declared they would be quite comfortable in two big armchairs.

It was noon when the Eskimo woke; and after a cup of tea and some ham and eggs he said he was as good as new and must be on his way once more. He would drop in again very soon to see how Paul was coming along.

"I'll go back to the Springs with Tautuk," Dr. Sloane announced. "You need the room here, and as you're an expert nurse, Mrs. Barrau, I feel safe in leaving my patients in your charge. There's nothing to do but keep them as quiet as possible and change the bandages on Paul often. I'm leaving this ointment. You have plenty of cotton and gauze?"

She nodded. "I never go any place without them."

"Good idea. You never know what's going to happen. I'll come back in a day or so; and by then Paul and Moose will be on the mend. Perhaps able to come to the Springs for a little change. It's interesting there. I'm planning to remain a couple of weeks more myself."

"Will you be sure to report the telephone out of order?" Mrs. Barrau was determined not to be left again with the feeling of utter helplessness that had been so terrible to her before Tautuk had appeared.

"Yes, I'll report it at once, and probably a man will be over from Shelton to-morrow to repair it. If you want me, just ring up. There are several teams there, and I could be here in no time."

After a few parting instructions the doctor was ready to leave. He took another look at the dogs, whom he had examined earlier, and saw that they were lying quietly on their beds of clean straw. They barely stirred at his entrance. "You can use the same ointment on them that I gave you for Paul, Mrs. Barrau. They'll be none the worse for their experience as soon as the raw spots heal. They certainly had pluck."

Tautuk went softly into Paul's room. The boy did not speak at the opening of the door, but still moaned as he tossed restlessly from side to side.

As Tautuk drew on his fur parka and mukluks, Mrs. Barrau and Moose thanked him again and again; but he seemed to regard what he had done as all in the day's work.

"Good boy, good deer, good dogs, good feel inside, good-bye." He grinned as he jestingly summed up the adventure. It was the inborn modesty and reserve of the Eskimo race that made him wave aside the credit that was due him; for no one knew better than he the hazards of such a storm.

Mrs. Barrau, in spite of the cold, stood in front of the cabin to bid farewell to her departing friends. The sun which had struggled through dark clouds now shone on the scarlet and yellow trappings of the

reindeer; making a vivid note of color as they moved steadily away over the snowy plains.

For several days Paul suffered severely. Twice Mrs. Barrau telephoned the doctor; for, true to his promise, the wires had been repaired at once.

"Paul is really in agony," his mother said. But the doctor was reassuring.

"It's perfectly natural he should be. However unconscious one is during the actual process, the after effects of freezing are exceedingly painful. Give him another powder when necessary, and don't worry. Tautuk 'll stop for me on Friday, and we'll be over early in the afternoon."

Mrs. Barrau was very busy with her various duties. Moose was so much better that she had difficulty in making him accept the rôle of an invalid. He was much more content to remain indoors, however, when Paul was able to lie on the couch in the living room and they could talk over the affairs of the past week.

Each day Hope, Hobo, and Wolf, who were recovering rapidly, were allowed to come in to see Paul; while Navarre and Dick, as co-patients with Paul and Moose, spent most of the time on rugs beside their masters.

Paul was loud in his praise of the whole team during their ordeal.

"They were all true-blue, Moose, every one. Old Dick was there with the goods till he hurt his shoulder. But I guess if it hadn't been for Navarre and Hope, too, I wouldn't be here now. I don't think I could've

lasted much longer. The wind cut into me like a whip. And my gloves might just as well 've been made of tissue paper, 'stead of fur, the way my hands felt. And dark—pitch black. But I couldn't see anyway, my eyelids were stuck so tight with ice. Gee, it was fierce to think of you and Mother being so scared and you so sick. But Navarre——”

The dog, hearing his name, struggled to his feet and climbed on the cot with Paul. The boy's voice was not quite steady. “He really *did* save my life, didn't he, when he came to give the alarm?”

Moose looked up from his task of putting a new bandage on Dick. “He saved you, all right. He oughta hev one o' them little life-savin' medals hangin' round his neck fer it, too. But I reckon settin' purty in the busum of his fam'ly, like this, an' bein' treated so classy, he won't bother none 'bout deckerations. Likely, though, now he's got the life-savin' habit, he'll aim t' be a perfessional hero an' git his picshur in the papers an' everythin'.”

“I'll bet he'll do that too, some day,” Paul replied with pride. Then, with an eagerness to give credit where it so richly belonged, “I can't say what I think of Tautuk, but I guess you and Mother made him understand. And I'll hand it to his deer, too, for being O.K. They never seemed to get tired. I guess they're like your 'Fords.' Not much for speed, but——”

“I'll hev t' break it t' you gentle, Son, but they got speed too. A few years ago some folks that wanted the low-down on this here speed business fixed up some

test races to Fort Davis an' back. Tautuk, Split-the-Wind, Jimmie, an' a coupla more sporty Eskimos got so doggoned sick an' tired o' hearin' the dog men howlin' 'bout what dogs kin do, they jest up an' challenged the dog drivers to a show-down. It kinda looked like a joke t' Coke Hill, Seppala, an' Scotty Allan, an' some o' the other big men in the game, an' they riz right up an' tuk the bait.

"The deer teams was t' do the course in the mornin' an' the dog teams in the afternoon; the same jedges keepin' time. O' course, they couldn't mix 'em up; it wouldn't 'a' bin a race, it 'd 'a' bin a riot.

"Well, you know Nome when it comes t' racin'. Why, the town 'd turn out t' see a jellyfish race a clam, an' bet real money on it too. This wasn't no exception. All the Eskimos was out in their Sunday-go-ter-meetin' duds, with flags an' sich lent 'em by Tom Ross o' the Life Savin' Station, like he does fer all them events.

"The prizes was a purse o' fifty dollars, a ham, a big box o' chewin' gum, an' twenty theayter tickets fer the movies. You know how them natives is 'bout shows an' gum. They'd rather go ter the movies an' chew gum than do anythin' else in the world; so it was sure goin' t' be some grand day fer 'em if they was in the runnin', whichever prize they copped off."

"But you don't mean to tell me, Moose, that the deer really won?"

"That's what they done, all right. Our friend Tautuk come in first, in thirty-three minits an' eight

seconds; some time, I'll say, fer seven or eight mile over a mighty bum trail; an' the dogs was thirty seconds slower. Them Eskimos has bin sorta heady 'bout it ever sence.

"I reckon they got a funny bone in 'em somewheres, 'cause Tautuk said he'd call his three best deer Sep-pala, Coke Hill, an' Scotty, so's them men cud see their names makin' records onct in a while. Kin you beat it? That's why Tautuk gives me the ha-ha when we git t' argufyin' over what dogs an' deer kin do."

"I'll be darned," Paul exclaimed. "And I've always thought of them as good old slowpokes."

"Then you got another think comin'. There ain't bin no endurance tests 'twixt 'em so fur's I've heered; but I'm purty nigh sure that in the long run a dog's pride an' loyalty 'll count fer a lot. A deer 'll do jest ez much ez he's able, but when he's through, he's through. Stubborn, too. Now a dog—I mean a *real* one, like Baldy o' Nome, Irish, an' John Johnson's blue-eyed Siberian Kolma, they'll——"

"And Navarre and Dick," Paul interrupted.

"You bet—and Navarre and Dick too—why, they'll go on their *hearts*, fer a master they love when their bodies is all wore out."

"Moose," Paul said seriously, "do you think dogs have souls as well as hearts? Or do you believe that when they're dead that's the end of them? I hate to think that."

"Well, Son, I ain't up much on sich questions. You kin ask Bishop Rowe when he's in Nome next

summer. Likely he'll be able t' tell. He's drove dogs himself—fer thousands o' miles; an' I'll bet he'll be willin' t' give 'em an even break fer a happy huntin' ground in the hereafter. I'd like t' figger that Dick an' me was goin' the same trail together somewheres else when we're through down here."

On Friday when Dr. Sloane arrived he was satisfied with the progress of all of his patients; and Tautuk's amiable face beamed with delight as he saw Paul propped up with pillows, apparently over the worst of his troubles. He took one of the bandaged hands in his own firm grasp. Involuntarily Paul drew back.

Moose Jones chuckled as he said warningly, "Easy there, Tautuk; I reckon Paul wouldn't want a purty gal even t' hold them paws o' hisn jest now, let alone a skookum brave like you."

"Now you know you got hands?" Tautuk inquired sympathetically. "First night fingers all same stone."

"I'll say I know I've got hands," Paul remarked ruefully. "They feel like they'd been held against a red-hot stove."

"Always that way. Hurt bad, all same burn. How ears?"

"I'll bet they'd bust if you touched them; like big, sore boils. Sit here, Tautuk. Move over, Navarre. That sure was great stuff you did for me when I was lost. I'll never forget it, never."

Tautuk, embarrassed, tried to change the subject. "Oh, lot men get freeze, not die."

"Well, this freezing business isn't what it's cracked up to be. Dan Kelly told me it doesn't hurt. Said some guy told him that who said he was nearly frozen to death."

Tautuk's white teeth showed in a wide smile. "Oh, freeze all right. Unfreeze not so good."

"Do you remember," the boy continued gratefully, when the Eskimo had drawn up a chair beside him, "that I called you Santa Claus in fun? You were just like pictures of him when you turned up Christmas Day with your reindeer all dolled up and the pack of things in your sled for the kids at the Igloo. Well, believe me, you pushed old man Santa clean off the map for me. I just hope that Christmas 'll always bring something that looks as fine to me as you and Navarre did when I opened my eyes and saw you bending over me in that canyon. You didn't seem real."

Mrs. Barrau placed some coffee and a tempting layer cake on the table. "Won't you have some?" she asked the doctor and Tautuk. "I've just been baking, and you must be hungry after your drive."

"How about me?" Paul inquired. "I've been on baby food so long I'm almost drooling."

"No rich cake yet," Dr. Sloane answered. "Perhaps by Sunday."

"Gee, Doc, that's tough. When I was half asleep and more 'n half starved on the trail I kept myself

awake by thinking of the bully stuff I'd have to eat when I was back home again."

"Pretty tough, but you'll have to be careful for a few days more."

It was agreed that by the first of the next week the Barraus and Moose Jones should go to the Hot Springs. "There'll be plenty of room there then for you and the two teams," the doctor remarked as he took his place in Tautuk's sled and waved good-bye.

Moose was now able to make definite plans for working the claim by spring. One day, after figuring closely, he announced, "Wouldn't surprise me none ef we made a handsome clean-up this year."

Mrs. Barrau, bringing in some dried willows for the fire, paused to say, "I hope you're right. It won't be long before we'll have to think of college for Paul, and you need a trip. You haven't been outside for years."

"The outside don't hold much fer me," he answered soberly. "My folks is all gone, an' I need mighty little fer myself an' Dick an' the rest o' this here fam'ly, who ain't got no high-toned idees 'bout what's comin' to 'em ef we do strike it rich."

A stick of wood had dropped from Mrs. Barrau's arms as she came in from the shed. Navarre, rousing himself, picked it up in his mouth and laid it carefully on the pile beside the stove; going back for more.

"Mother's little helper," Mrs. Barrau exclaimed laughingly as she stooped and stroked his head, while Paul called out, "Good boy—that's the stuff."

The dog, pleased by the approval, went into the

bedroom and returned with one of Paul's slippers; then looked about as if trying to find something more he might bring.

"That's great, isn't it, Moose? I had no idea he knew any tricks. Do you s'pose Sam Milton taught him this?"

Moose shook his head dubiously. "I wouldn't put it past Sam. He had the name, up in Teller, o' treatin' his dogs like babies, an' spiled ones at that. I reckon he got some fun out o' makin' 'em do stunts; he was kinda lonesome. But triffin' ain't good fer sled dogs. They got serious business t' 'tend to; an' the less anyone sidetracks 'em from that the better."

"But it hasn't hurt Navarre. He's a good sled dog, even if Sam did teach him other things."

"I wasn't castin' no slurs on Navarre. He's got brains, an' a trick or two won't count agin him. Likely enough he'll find out that showin' off don't git you nowheres. You gotta come through with the goods. It sure would give me a pain ef I ever seen him sittin' on his hind legs beggin' fer a hand-out an' sich."

"Then I'll promise never to teach him anything like that," the boy replied smilingly.

"Even simple tricks is dang'rous to some dogs," Moose continued warningly. "You know the Yellow Peril that belongs t' the Darlings?"

"I'll say I do. He and Navarre had a peach of a scrap."

"That's so. I forgot. Well, Ned Darling told me he learnt the Peril t' bring in the newspaper an' allers

give him a lump o' sugar fer it. An' it wasn't no time afore he went t' all the neighbors an' brung back their papers, one at a time, an' expected Ned t' be tickled t' death. There's some dogs that never kin tell the diff'rence 'tween manners an' morals, an' he's one of 'em. Then there's others jest nacheraly wise to it. Old Baldy o' Nome, fer instance."

"Baldy being Navarre's grandfather ought to help some, then."

"It will. Baldy's above spilin'. Why, I seen Mrs. Darling onct tryin' t' make him carry her purse; an' the look he give her was enough t' make even a woman feel ashamed. It said plain ez words, 'See here, lady, I ain't no light-minded lap dog; you jest lay off this foolishness.' He was plumb disgusted. I'll bet she never told Scotty 'bout it. They say in Nome she's clean ruined Jack McMillan with her pettin'; an' they used t' call him a man eater." Moose glanced cautiously toward the kitchen where Mrs. Barrau was preparing dinner. "Son, no disrespeck to women, but don't you ever let 'em mix with your team. They don't seem to hev no dog sense whatsoever."

When the day came for their excursion to the Hot Springs Paul was all excitement. He was anxious to find out just how the lame dogs would stand the trip; for though they had not been exercised regularly, their stiffness was apparently disappearing.

As in the journey from Nome, Mrs. Barrau was Moose Jones's passenger, and Paul and his team followed close behind. This time, however, Paul

was obliged to give his orders from a protected position in the body of the sled.

"We'll travel slow," Moose remarked. "We don't want no relapses fer us two pore little invalids, Paul, ner fer the dogs."

They moved across the valley in the dim noon sunlight. The trail was smoothly crusted from the recent severe cold, which made the going fairly easy.

Moose had tied Canton flannel mukluks on the feet of all the dogs, for the icy crystals were hard on their pads, especially of those who had been frostbitten. He also blanketed them. "It's so camm you may think it's bammy; but the thermometer said thirty below, an' we ain't goin' fast ernough t' git het up none."

Every now and then an Arctic hare or a white fox crossed the trail far ahead of them. They looked to Paul as if they might be little animal ghosts, they were so silent and colorless. But most of the dogs appreciated their reality and showed signs of wanting to give chase.

Dick, who sometimes went hunting with Moose, pricked up his ears and increased his gait.

"Steady there, Dick, this ain't no huntin' party. We're goin' t' the Springs fer our healths—you too; so cut out this speed racket."

Navarre was not at all excited by the glimpses of these wild furred creatures. Paul wondered if it were true, as reported of Sam Milton, that he was so fond

of all animals that he had tamed ground squirrels, and even timid ermine, till they came to his cabin to be fed. Navarre's familiarity with them might account for his present indifference. Their right to live had, possibly, been impressed upon him by Sam.

It would help a lot, Paul thought, if Navarre proved to be beyond such temptations. Why, in a juvenile race once, poor Dan Kelly had been beaten because his team hot-footed after a black cat instead of minding their own business. He couldn't wonder that Dan was superstitious now about black cats. In the very same race George Allan owed his victory to the fact that Baldy of Nome had held Queen down when she wanted to bite an Eskimo standing near. He had jerked her back into law and order pronto; and it had marked the beginning of his reputation for leadership.

Yes, Paul was certain he could already see in Navarre many of the qualities of his famous grandfather. He'd sure get a big kick in developing them.

With these pleasant thoughts the journey seemed a short one; and Paul was surprised when he saw the curling smoke that he knew must be their destination. The sun had already set, though it was not yet two o'clock; and the dark purple shadows of the high mountains fell across the Kruzgamapa Valley, making it look like a huge amethyst bowl rimmed by the crimson and gold of a brilliant afterglow.

In a few moments more they had pulled up before the door of the Hot Springs Road House, where they

were welcomed by George Davis, the proprietor, Dr. Sloane, and the others who were still there.

The doctor assisted them out of the sleds, and two men employed about the place led the teams to a long shed that served as a kennel.

"I'll come out an' feed 'em later," Moose called. "Don't want 'em t' git inter irreg'lar habits."

The living room was large and comfortable, with strong home-made furniture. A great cannon-ball stove heated the place, and about this tables and chairs were grouped informally. Old papers, magazines, and well worn books were scattered here and there, and bright lithographs were tacked on the whitewashed walls.

The dining room and kitchen were in an ell, and upstairs were the crude sleeping quarters.

Within a short distance was a long, low shack built over the hot springs which bubbled up through the sand unceasingly. Cold water was piped in to make the temperature endurable; and tanks big enough for swimming had been made, with dressing rooms about them.

Paul and Moose had been able to borrow bathing suits and shortly were splashing around in the pool. The water, highly mineralized, was soft as milk to the touch.

"Queer, isn't it, to find these springs almost sizzling where everything else is covered with ice and snow," Paul remarked.

"I reckon one o' the volcanoes that Alaska's filled"

with has somethin' t' do with it. They sure do go off on rampages, an' while I ain't sayin' nothin' again volcanoes *as* sich, I don't want no close dealin's with 'em. Not me."

The next few days passed pleasantly. Mrs. Barrau and Paul read before the fire, or took long walks across the tundra with the dogs, while Moose drove over to Shelton several times to see men about working the claim.

Every day Paul and Moose enjoyed the pool and found the hot water very beneficial.

"I'm hardly stiff at all now," Paul said. "I wish Navarre and Dick could come in with us. Dick's limping a little yet, and Navarre has to be pretty careful. They're not having much fun just watching the others have the time of their lives, chasing rabbits or getting on the scent of a fox."

The day before he left, however, Navarre did have a most unexpected dip into the tank.

While Paul and Moose were resting after their swim, they left the door of the bathhouse open so that the thick steam might escape.

Hobo and Wolf had spied 'Pussy-willow, a half-grown gray kitten belonging to George Davis. They made no distinction between rabbits and cats and immediately gave chase. The terrified little creature dashed toward the shack for shelter, hotly pursued by them.

Navarre, waiting patiently for Paul to appear, grasped the situation at a glance and started off

after the other dogs. He overtook and passed them, in spite of his recent lameness, just as the kitten darted through the open door. Too desperate to stop and look about her, she fell into the water with a splash, and Navarre after her, catching her by the scruff of her neck.

Paul and Moose, hearing the commotion, stepped out of their dressing rooms. Paul's heart sank. He would not have believed this of Navarre who had shown a real friendliness to the cat. He had even seen Navarre roll a small ball with his paws, so that Pussy-willow might play with it. Gee, he did hope that the fierce wolf strain Black Mart predicted would show itself wasn't coming to the surface now.

Navarre scrambled out on the platform on the tank and gently laid Pussy-willow, wet and bedraggled but spitting and clawing gamely, at Paul's feet. He wagged his tail and looked eagerly into his master's face for the expected approval.

As they went back to the Road House, Paul carrying the mewling kitten in his arms, Moose remarked with a grin, "Didn't I tell you jest what was goin' t' happen? Navarre's gittin' the life-savin' habit strong. I reckon he'll be doin' it wholesale next. Like Winquist's old husky that saved four men in a storm. He give the alarm, an' they was rescued. They bought the dog a collar deckerated with gold nuggets an' their names on it. An' Winquist got him a real bed with kivers to it, 'cause he'd caught rheumatiz in the blizzard. You gotta be awful keerful

'bout overdoin' hero stuff. Ef Navarre does it reg'lar he won't hev time fer nothin' but bein' rewarded."

"That's all right with me, Moose. I just hope some day he'll do something big enough so the whole world 'll want to reward him for it."

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE BANQUET OF THE BOW-WOW WONDER WORKERS

PAUL was sorry when it was time to leave the Kruzgamapa Hot Springs. It was necessary, however, to stop a day or so at the Jones cabin on the way back to Nome, where school would open again shortly.

It was pleasant, after long tramps and drives across the snow, to sit down to an ample meal of trout or grayling, caught under the ice of neighboring streams, of boiled ptarmigan, shot in the near-by willows, and pies made from the blueberries that, in season, abound in that vicinity. There were fresh vegetables, too; a real treat, which were grown at the Springs in July and August and kept in "warm storage" to be used during the winter.

He had enjoyed the cheery nights when the guests

had gathered about the stove and had exchanged yarns of their experiences as pioneers.

One or two had gone over the famous Trail of '98 to Dawson, when incredible hardships had been endured by those lured there by the reports of the rich strike on the Klondike. Several others were among the thousands of Argonauts who thronged to Nome in 1900 at the first cry of "Gold!" and had remained to try to capture the elusive fortunes that the early days in the camp had promised.

Both Mrs. Barrau and Paul liked these hardy men, who now faced the toil and loneliness of their daily living with the same courage and sportsmanship with which they had braved the first hardships and dangers of an unknown land.

Paul listened breathlessly to all they had to say, told with the simplicity of boys recounting a vacation hike into the hills.

He was interested especially in the stories that dealt with their use of dogs; for he was becoming convinced that Navarre, whose intelligence had already been proved, with the proper training might take his place, some day, among the great dog stars whose names and deeds were being woven into the history of Alaska.

"Some dogs are so smart they're uncanny," George Davis observed one evening when they were discussing the matter; "and I think they have a sense of humor, too. When the Darlings were here a month ago they had the Yellow Peril with them. He used to chase my cat, and Ned was all for breaking

him of the habit. When he caught the Peril at it red handed he'd take a little switch to him. I will say the pup didn't get much of a whipping, but it was enough to let him realize he was being punished. Finally he got so, when he'd done anything wrong, he'd go to the corner where the switch was kept, bring it out, and lay it at Ned's feet; looking up in his face as much as to say, 'Let's get this off our minds as quick as possible and then forget it. It don't hurt me and satisfies you, so go to it.'"

Paul laughed. "I know the Darlings and the Peril, and I'll bet the whippings were a joke all around. Anyway, he's not a sled dog—just a pet—so I guess it don't make much difference how he acts. Moose says you have to be firm, though, with work dogs. But I'd hate to have to lick Navarre for anything at all, the way I feel about him now."

When they left the Golden Bear Claim for home, Paul and Moose, as well as the dogs, had recovered, and the trip back was uneventful.

The details of their adventures had been telephoned from the Springs, and both the morning and evening papers of Nome had contained long accounts of them. An Associated Press dispatch, even, had been sent outside, telling of Paul Barrau's loss and recounting the picturesque part played by Navarre and Tautuk and his reindeer in the rescue.

The Bow-Wow Wonder Workers felt, naturally, that some special demonstration should be made in Paul's honor. It was not often that anything unusual

happened to a member of the association; and when it did it was generally of an unpleasant order, like flunking out of math, or having tonsillitis. Nothing to brag about.

"They say at the cable office," Dan Kelly remarked proudly, "that some big papers in San Francisco and New York wired in for more dope about the whole thing and are going to have a lot about it in a Sunday supplement, with pictures and everything."

"Most always," Ted Wilson observed, "you have to be murdered or froze to death to get such stuff written about you; and then you can't have any fun out of it yourself. Now here's Paul, alive and kicking, to do something for, and we sure ought to make it swell. Hot dog!"

A banquet seemed the logical form for the entertainment, instead of a reception, which had been suggested.

"Receptions are pretty punk," Gene Terry volunteered disapprovingly and with authority. "My mother gave one two weeks ago for the school teacher that came in last fall. And they didn't have a darned thing to eat or drink except tea, and sandwiches so thin you could most see through 'em, and cakes you couldn't take two bites out of. I'm all off receptions. But the invites were keen. We could copy them and pick out our own grub."

"Will Navarre be in on it too?" Ted inquired. "He ought to, for Paul would 've had tough luck without him. Might have lost his hands or feet, if he

didn't die. I don't see how we could leave Navarre out; and we might ask some of his friends—dogs he don't fight with—and give 'em a square meal. I know Billy Webb at the meat market 'd be tickled pink to furnish any meat we'd need. He has a dandy racing team, and he'd feel it was an honor to be asked for soup bones and roast ends. Matt Lawson would cook 'em for us, and we'd have paper plates and——”

“And napkins and paw bowls,” Tim Neal interrupted sarcastically, “and maybe cushions for 'em to sit on.”

Gene, quite unconscious of the sarcasm, responded enthusiastically, “That's a fine idea, Tim. I could borrow a lot of pillows from my mother's couch, if she didn't catch me doing it, and I guess some of the rest of you could too. How many dogs do you suppose there'd be?”

Ted began to count them. “Eight or nine that belong to us, all the racing leaders and——”

Dan Kelly, who had been considering the matter seriously while the others were talking, broke in, “See here fellows, that wouldn't do at all. You know how jealous leaders are. Matt Lawson told me that Baldy of Nome and Irish aren't on speaking terms most of the time. He says Baldy thinks Irish is a show-off, Irish thinks Baldy's a grouch, and old Dubby right in the same kennel hasn't any use for either of them. Has a notion that racing's the bunk, and won't even look at the racing teams when they go out of the barn with their light sleds and fancy

harness. He's wise that they're out for speed, and not for work, and it makes him tired."

"And they're not the only ones," Ted added. "From the way they act I'll bet John Johnson's Siberian Kolma feels that Seppala's Siberian Togo is a false alarm; and all the huskies in town have it in for Morte Atkinson's blue setters. We wouldn't be having a banquet, we'd be having a prize fight."

"Then, too," Dan resumed, "all the folks that own good dogs would be sore as boils if we left out their little Fidoes. The Darlings would be mad clean through if the Peril wasn't invited, and so would be the Deans with Mars, and the Fire Department, and the marshal, and heaps of others. No, the only thing to do is to have a *family* party for Navarre. His grandfather Baldy, his other grandfather Dubby, and——"

"I thought you just said that Dubby had no use for *any* racers, and now you want to ask him with Baldy." Tim Neal's tone was critical.

"If you'd listen once in a while, 'stead of gabbing so darned much, you'd know a heap more 'n you do. What I said was that Dubby don't pay any attention at all to the racers. That don't mean he fights 'em. He just pretends they ain't there. And somewhere between him and Baldy we could put Ed Rohn's Star. Let's see, he must be about a second cousin of Navarre's. And Star's like Baldy; never scraps. Yes, only those four, and then there'll be no bad feeling. And with nobody hurt, there ought to be a

lot of prizes put up for the High School Race, like last year."

The boys all agreed that Dan's plan was, indeed, the only one to keep canine and social Nome from embarrassing entanglements; and all further discussions would be considered by special committees.

As they separated Gene Terry remarked confidentially to Dan, "I could bring some china dishes for the dogs, too, if you think it would be classier. Mother's got some she calls service plates, and only uses them when we have company, so she'd never miss them for one night. They're swell, and big enough to hold soup bones and most anything."

"Fine. Trot 'em out for the big night."

"And say, Dan, while I think of it, you gotta be mighty careful how you handle Dubby. You wouldn't believe he's sensitive, to look at him, but he is. So doggoned sensitive that you——"

"What do you mean—sensitive? Sounds pretty silly—a husky that could lick anything in town if he had a mind to. The King of the Trail sensitive! Wouldn't that jar you!"

"All the same, you remember when the English Class gave their Extravaganza last year he nearly busted up the show because he felt insulted."

"I had flu then—wasn't there. In bed for three weeks."

"That's so. Well, anyway, there was a trail song written for it, and some of the fellows and girls dressed up in their furs and stood by a sled to sing it. Someone

happened to think it would be a good thing to have a dog in the act. The teacher who was coaching 'em thought so too; said it would give 'local color.'" Gene laughed reminiscently. "Dubby always behaves so well, he got the part, and as he does just what he's told he didn't have to go to rehearsals.

"When the night came, Matt Lawson brought him up from the Allan and Darling kennel, all fixed out in his best harness; and when his act was ready Matt led him out on the stage and told him to sit right in front of the sled and keep quiet.

"The curtain went up, and it was sure keen. Snow mountains and everything. The sled that Seppala won the last Sweepstakes with, the girls looking peachy in their parkas, and Dubby as still as if he'd been painted. There was a lot of clapping, but he didn't bat an eye, even when the music began and the kids commenced to sing, with plenty of pep, too, believe me.

"They went through the first verse O.K., but when they got to the chorus there was a riot. It goes, 'There's the sound of bells, and cheery yells, and a cry of "Mush, mush, mush,"' and some more. But when that little 'local color' heard the words 'Mush, mush, mush,' he up and dashed off the stage so fast he looked like a gray Rolls-Royce doing seventy-five per. There he'd been sitting pretty, ready to stick it out as long as the rest of the bunch; and then the first rattle out of the box they yelled 'Mush' at him, loud and all at once. He mushed all right—thought he was

being told to 'beat it.' But, boy! You should have seen the dirty look he gave the singers. Everybody in the hall yelled their heads off and gave the malamute howl.

"Even Matt couldn't get him to go back to finish the stunt. So you see you can't monkey with Dubby at the party. He just won't stand for having his feelings hurt; and they would be, playing second fiddle to Baldy of Nome and Navarre. He ain't used to it."

"That'll be all right," Dan answered. "I'll put his cushion next to me and see he gets a square deal. It's coming to him, if he ain't a racer."

The evening of Paul's return the Workers called upon him in a body, and after hearing of his experiences at first hand, informed him, with much formality, of the banquet to be given for him and Navarre.

"It's all right for Navarre. He and Tautuk and the deer were the whole works. All I did," he confessed ruefully, "was to get lost and found."

"Well, you started after a doctor for Moose, didn't you, in a storm? That's where you get in," from Dan. "We want Moose to come, too. He'll be the only outsider. We did think about inviting Judge Tucker, Mayor Lomen, the marshal, the fire chief, and the chief of police, and some other big bugs, and let them make speeches 'bout you. But speeches take an awful lot of time away from eating, so we're going to 'say it with grub' instead. Maybe it won't be so solemn, but it sure will be a lot more satisfyin', don't you think so, Paul?"

"I'll say it will. Besides, I couldn't stand being speeched about. Maybe they'd say I'd been game, or something like that, and I wasn't. Of course, I'm not going to tell anybody outside our gang, but honestly I cried like a girl when I was sure I was lost; and worse than that, I bawled right out loud when I saw Navarre hitting the trail and leaving me to freeze. It was as bad as if you or my mother or Moose had done it."

As was always the case in Nome in January, interest now began to center in dog racing. Most of the possible racing teams were already being groomed and exercised for the minor events in that line, which were to take place before the All Alaska Sweepstakes, generally scheduled for about the first of April.

The High School Race, the one most vitally interesting to the Bow-Wow Wonder Workers, was set for a date early in February, so with that and the banquet so close at hand, Paul Barrau and his friends were unusually busy. Naturally, there was a certain amount of studying to be done also, but the long-suffering teachers who had once refused to acknowledge dog racing as a rival to school honors were now convinced that it played an important part in the juvenile life of Nome, and accepted the fact with resignation.

There were many conferences of the Workers when dog dope was gravely discussed; and at least four members of the order were sure of entries: Paul

Barrau, Dan Kelly, Gene Terry, and Ted Wilson, who were known to be the best drivers.

All of the others generously volunteered to lend them any necessary dogs. Even Tim Neal was willing that his Prince should be used; but with the memory of the bribes that Prince demanded for service rendered he was gratefully but firmly declined as a candidate.

"Of course," Paul remarked to Moose one day as they were hitching up the team for exercise, "I'm not afraid of any leader the guys in school own, but we're allowed to borrow dogs, and nearly anyone can get crackerjacks from racing kennels. Navarre can't stack up against the old stagers yet. He don't know the game."

"There's some o' the best that *nobody* kin git. Scotty won't let Baldy go in these here little sprints. Says it makes Baldy sore t' run jest a few miles an' then find there ain't nothin' more to it. He gits a kinda 'all dressed up an' no place t' go' feelin'. It 'ud be like askin' you fellers t' play marbles with kids in knee pants."

"Well, then there's Baldy out, but he's only one. There's Seppala's Togo, and Fred Ayers' crossbreds; the ones whose foxhound mother was brought in by Captain Martin Crimmins, down at the Fort. They're whizz-bangs. And——"

"Don't borry trouble, Son. Go on trainin' Navarre, Hope, and Hobo fer all that's in 'em; and you kin count on my Wolf and Tom. I'd lend you Dick, too;

but he won't do nothin' without he's in the lead, and you wouldn't want t' throw Navarre down. Wouldn't be fair."

"No, this is his first race, and it sure is up to me to let him show what he can do."

Paul hooked Wolf and Tom behind Navarre and in front of Hope and Hobo and found that they pulled well and willingly in that position.

Each afternoon he returned from a spin more and more encouraged by the team work the dogs were doing, and with praise for the manner in which Navarre was accepting responsibilities and meeting emergencies.

Dan Kelly, too, was elated over the prospects of the team he had spoken for—a team composed of dogs that were used to being driven together. "It's a darned good thing they are, I can tell you, for I haven't a chance to try them out often, with the banquet taking up so much of my time."

The invitations to the banquet were out, finally, and quite the most elaborate the town had ever seen: At the top of a heavy white card was a picture of Navarre, and at the bottom one of Tautuk and his reindeer in their gay trappings, which had been tinted with water colors by Mamie Kelly.

They had wanted a photograph of Paul too; but he would not consent to this. "There's enough of me in the rest of it," he maintained, as he glanced over the first draft that was submitted for his approval.

The wording had been copied, more or less, from

the cards that Gene Terry's mother had issued for the reception to the new teacher, but changed sufficiently to meet the requirements of this very special event.

The Ancient and Honorable Order of the Bow-Wow Wonder Workers of Nome, Alaska, requests your presence at a Banquet to be tendered Mr. Paul Barrau, a member of the organization, in recognition of his heroic efforts on behalf of Mr. Edward Jones of the Kougarok, who will also be a guest on this occasion.

Saturday evening, January 20, at seven o'clock, at the Club Rooms at the Golden Gate Hotel. Please reply to Mr. Daniel Kelly, President.

"They're so keen," Dan observed to Paul as they examined them admiringly, "that I wish everybody could have got one; but we're showing them all over so's folks 'll know we do things up in style. And say, when I met Judge Tucker this morning on Front Street I told him how sorry I was that we couldn't invite him, because Moose Jones was going to be the only outsider, and he pretty near had to die to get in on it. And the judge wasn't sore a bit; and just to show how much he thinks of you and Navarre he's going to give us a big freezer of ice cream. So I said we were much obliged, and for that I'd name the first real classy dog I ever get after him—John Randolph Tucker. Then he said that for the compliment the president of the Wonder Workers was planning to do

him some day he'd send all the cake we want to go with the ice cream. I call that coming through mighty decent."

"You bet; and it was pretty smart of you. How did you happen to think of it, Dan?"

"Oh," modestly, "I tried it once on Bishop Rowe, and it came out the same way. I guess," thoughtfully, "I'd better work it now on Mayor Lomen, Marshal Jordan, and the fire chief and chief of police. If they are as tickled as the judge was we'll have all the stuff we need for the eats; and then, for the money we've got collected already, we could give a theater party at the movies afterward."

Dan's happy idea worked so perfectly that the mayor promised a baked ham, the marshal a turkey, and the Fire Department a big fire bucket of lemonade; while the chief of police volunteered several dozen hot-dogs.

"Police dogs, too; don't forget that," he chuckled.

The Workers hoped that these carefully chosen citizens would not compare notes. But even if they did they would merely find out that their namesakes of some future date would make a whole team worthy of the order that had singled them out for special mention. Nobody could be peeved about that.

When the night of the banquet arrived the club-rooms presented a gala appearance. Artificial palms had been supplied by Jim Schwartzel, flags of various fraternal organizations secured without difficulty, and

the colors of the famous Sweepstakes teams gladly loaned by their owners.

A large photograph of Baldy of Nome was draped with the Allan and Darling White and Gold, under which he had won so many hard-fought victories. But because old Dubby refused recognition of any such trivial stuff as colors, according to Matt Lawson, there were boughs of pine brought down from Timber by the mail carrier, to be used as a background for the husky's picture. A royal purple ribbon, however, was entwined with the greens as a delicate but unmistakable tribute to the name he had borne with so much dignity ever since lawyer Fink had bestowed it upon him—King of the Arctic Trail.

The boys knew, of course, that Paul Barrau had already selected red, white, and blue as his colors, since they were those of both his mother's and his father's countries; so that the tricolor of France and the Stars and Stripes were displayed conspicuously, with the name "Navarre" against them.

All of the High School girls who took an interest in the event—and it was a deep interest in spite of the stern discouragement of the Workers—had made paper flowers which, in clusters and garlands, helped materially to disguise the fact that the present imposing Banquet Hall had once been a humble coal cellar.

Two wreaths were also part of their contribution: one for Paul and one for Navarre. These represented laurels for heroes and had been given to Dan Kelly

by Mollie Day, to be presented at the proper moment during the ceremony.

"Laurel!" Tim Neal sniffed. "They're a darned sight more like scrub willow, and I'll bet Paul 'll be so disgusted with such tommyrot that he'll pitch his in the furnace, where it belongs. Laurel! Wouldn't that make a cat yowl!"

The others were willing to take a chance on Paul's innate politeness to keep him from any such demonstration; and of course Navarre would be quite ignorant of the meaning of his and regard it as something new in fancy harness.

A victrola was ready to be started upon Paul's entrance with the record, "See, the Conquering Hero Comes." Tim Neal, in a pessimistic mood, observed to Dan Kelly, "You'd better tell what's being played. I guess nobody knows it, and the old tune's a flop, anyway. Sounds like a funeral march. And Moose Jones might think it was something we'd planned for him if he'd croaked and forgot to change when he didn't. 'A Hot Time in the Old Town To-night' would be a heap better, I think."

But Dan was firm. "Maybe we'll have that later, when we get going full blast. This banquet's different from our regular suppers, and it's got to be classy. I'll bet everybody in town 'll hear about it to-morrow, and there ain't going to be any funny business as long as I'm running the show. We never had a chance before for a blow-out like this, and it ain't going to be spoiled, no matter what *you* think. If you thought

oftener, Tim, maybe you'd think bigger and better thinks. Sorta get used to thinkin'. And the 'Conquering Hero' goes. Get that straight."

Gene Terry and Ted Wilson were selected to call at the Barrau house to act as an escort. Paul wore the Christmas suit that had been waiting for him; and Moose, in deference to the formality of the occasion, had put on what he termed a "biled shirt," and a tie of vivid yellow and red that had caught his eye in a shop window that morning.

"That'll show 'em," he remarked confidently to Paul, "that I'm all dolled up fer the party. Nobody ever seen me like this afore, an' I reckon they won't again. Not ef I kin help it. All I need," he added sorrowfully, "is a rose in my buttinghold an' a bull pup t' make me look like them dudes in magazine ads."

Navarre had been bathed and brushed till his coat shone like gray and sable satin. Paul had almost considered asking his mother for some violet toilet water to sprinkle on him when he realized what an insult it would be to Navarre to have him smell like a woman's lap dog. Gee, he was glad he hadn't done anything so dumb. He'd hate to have Moose know he'd even *thought* of it.

"Doesn't Navarre look great, Mother?" The boy's eyes were shining as he surveyed the superb creature, resplendent in the harness that Moose had given him, with its pompon and tinkling bells.

Mrs. Barrau's eyes filled with tears. To hide them,

she bent over Navarre and stroked him gently. "Yes, Son, he does look great, and he *is* great. It was a lucky day for us when you took him away from Mart Barclay because you were sorry for him."

At a thunderous knock by the escort, the signal agreed upon, the door of the hall was thrown open, and the strains of the "Conquering Hero" met the honor guests; as well as three loud cheers given by the Workers, led by an experienced yell leader.

Paul and Moose carried the situation off with an outward show of calmness, though Paul's heart was beating fast, and a deep flush crept into his brown cheeks. Navarre, however, plainly averse to advancing into unknown terrors without registering a protest, threw back his head and howled in dismay. From his second cousin, Star, came an answering and sympathetic response. While Baldy of Nome and Dubby, though they were more or less disturbed, made no sound; a tribute to Matt Lawson's insistence that they should be well behaved even when they were frightened or, worse still, bored by human peculiarities they could not understand.

When the record had run its course and the cheers had died away, Navarre, pacified by his master, was led unresisting to a cushion close behind Paul's chair at the right of Dan Kelly. Dan, besides his position of president, had also been given that of toastmaster. He now rapped sharply on the table for order.

"Gentlemen, be seated." There was a scraping of

chairs, and after a few moments an attentive silence. Dan cleared his throat. He had seen this done at public meetings, and it gave him time to glance for an instant at a piece of paper on which he had jotted down a few notes, and which he had tucked among the carnations in front of his place. These notes were the result of frequent recent conferences with Tom Gaffney, a distinguished local orator; and the remarks they outlined would have done credit, Dan secretly believed, to Webster or that old Greek guy that went around spouting knock-out speeches with pebbles in his mouth.

The complimentary and flowery tributes to Paul and Navarre, and the summing up of their achievements in the Kruzgamapa Valley, were received warmly; and the applause was loud and long when Dan made the announcement that he would call upon Mr. Paul Barrau and Mr. Edward Jones later. "After the participants in this momentous celebration," he glanced anxiously at the memorandum, "have enjoyed the bounteous collation so generously provided by the prominent citizens of the ever hospitable city of Nome, Alaska. . . ." There was something more but the card had slipped down into the bowl holding the flowers, so he decided to end on the note of Nome's hospitality. That was plenty, anyway. Great Scott, it had been hard enough to get that far, with all the fellows beginning to wriggle on their seats, and the ham and the turkey and the rest of the "bounteous collation" looming up like a million dollars.

When the appetites of the Wonder Workers had been satisfied and toasts had been drunk to the mayor, the judge, and to all who had contributed to the feast, as well as to Baldy, Dubby, and Star, Dan again rose and rapped for order.

"First I wish to inform you that the fine part Tautuk and his reindeer, Seppala, Scotty, and Coke Hill, played in the rescue of Paul Barrau has not been overlooked. To-day I forwarded to him on behalf of this club a handsome Waterbury watch, suitably engraved, and the biggest box of chewing gum that could be found in town. And now, gentlemen, it is my pleasure to call upon Moose—I mean Mr. Edward—Jones to say a few words in regard to the events that led up to this happy reunion."

Dan was fully conscious that he was covering himself with glory as presiding officer. Gee, but he was glad he'd consulted Tom Gaffney and was able to substitute such a finished sentence as this for the usual "say, you guys, if you've got anything more on your chests before we bust up this meeting, spit it out."

Moose, unaccustomed to addressing a public, looked about him helplessly. "I dunno as I got anythin' t' say that ain't bin said already. I kinda feel 's ef I'd butted inter this here party without reely belongin'. All I done was t' git pneumony an' give Paul and Navarre an' my friend Tautuk a chance t' be heroes; an' they sure was that all right. That there blizzard they run inter was one o' the worst ever. An'

any kid an' any dog that come out alive is cracker-jack mushers, believe me.

"An' I'll hand it ter all o' you that you'd 'a' done jest the same." He glanced at the group of alert boys admiringly. "Say, you're reel Alaskans, you are; you got the guts to' go through with anythin' you tackle, like Paul an' Navarre done. So all I want t' say is, Here's t' the Wonder Workers an' their Bow-Wows. Long may they wave t' be a example t' the whole doggoned North an' the United States of Ameriky."

Just before he called upon Paul Dan whispered, "Don't you go and spill what you told me about blubbering when you saw Navarre hitting the trail away from you. We got to go through with this hero stuff straight."

Paul's voice was unsteady as he began to speak. He, too, had consulted Tom Gaffney; though to his despair he found that in this exciting moment most of the sonorous phrases Tom had suggested had slipped out of his mind. "As Moose just said, I know that every one of you fellows would have done what I did for a friend, and most likely you'd have done it better."

There was a sharp, restraining nudge from Dan.

"Anyway, you remember when this order was started Ted Wilson's father said we had traditions to uphold; and if I've done any upholding I'm mighty glad. And I never want to forget that besides claiming two great countries as mine—America and France—"

he now recalled Tom's patriotic climax—"I desire also to faithfully and honorably represent the ideals of this Empire of the North—our own Alaska. I thank you."

Before he could be seated President Kelly, with much ceremony, presented the laurel wreath as a "well-merited tribute from the young ladies of the Nome High School to the accomplishment of an esteemed fellow pupil."

For a terrible instant Paul was afraid that he might be expected to wear the thing—like the pictured Emperors of Rome at gladiatorial contests. But Dan seemed satisfied when he thrust his arm through it, and assisted in dragging Navarre into a vacant chair placed for him, while the second wreath was hung around the struggling husky's neck.

The applause over this final rite was deafening, and Paul was obliged to whisper, "Steady, boy, steady," so that the recipient of the unexpected and clearly unwanted honor might not turn tail and fly from the scene of his triumph.

Matt and Ed Rohn appeared to lead Baldy of Nome, Dubby, and Star away from the festivities; and with the great affair at an end, Dan gave out the information that the Workers were to proceed to Eagle Hall, where they would, through the courtesy of the management—his language still remained formal and official—occupy the four stage boxes for the show.

Since for the last few weeks the Workers had been

far from reticent in regard to the plans for the evening, the audience was prepared for their arrival at the hall.

The orchestra—a hint from Tim Neal, Dan Kelly suspected—played “A Hot Time” as the boys filed in and took their seats. As was proper, Dan and Paul were in front of one of the boxes, with Navarre between them.

Paul was visibly embarrassed, while Navarre was panic-stricken. The music, the laurels, and the hearty hand clapping of the crowd in the body of the house, who, with much amusement, joined in the spirit of the affair, were almost too much for the dog. He had lived a simple life in Teller, where nothing so appalling as this ever happened, and it was only Paul’s firm hand on his collar that kept him from actual desertion when the lights were lowered to a sudden gloomy dusk.

By degrees Navarre became less nervous, and Paul, lost in the thrills of a Northern drama, relaxed his hold. The dog, sitting rigidly erect, was now apparently oblivious of everything happening about him. At length, however, a tense moment came, when the villain in the story, having bound the hero hand and foot and locked him in a cabin, was fleeing with a sack of furs and a poke of gold. Rin-tin-tin, the hero’s dog, had been shut in with his master. But that, the boys well knew, would not daunt any dog of Rin-tin-tin’s resources, so they waited breathlessly for him to

show his mettle. A shattered windowpane and a flying leap justified their faith; and in a second he was on the trail of the escaping thief.

It was Navarre's first movie; and anyway, as Paul explained afterward, he couldn't be expected to know that the villain *was* a villain. To Navarre he was just a man being hotly pursued by a relentless wolf-dog. Navarre's hair bristled, and he quivered with excitement. Paul, too intent on the next move to notice, kept his eyes fixed on the screen.

Rin-tin-tin, gaining on his victim, sprang upon him and bore him to the ground, tearing savagely at his throat. It was too much for Navarre. With a fierce growl he leaped over the low rail of the box and dashed across the stage to assist the fallen and helpless man.

The audience, grasping the situation, rocked with laughter. Then, to Navarre's amazement, the dog, so like his enemy the Yellow Peril, and the man were gone; and in their place were a girl and a boy, in no distress at all. But he was not to be fooled so easily. He looked into the wings and behind the curtains. He sniffed the air eagerly. Nothing. He had evidently been deceived in some mysterious and disconcerting way. Dismayed and humiliated, his laurel wreath awry, he climbed into the box again, crouching, crest-fallen, at Paul's feet.

"What did I tell you?" Moose leaned toward the boy, grinning. "Didn't I say that ef he ever got the life-savin' habit there wouldn't be no stoppin' him?"

You, little old cats, movie actors—nobody ner nothin' 'll be safe from bein' saved."

Paul stooped and caressed the dog. "It's a darned good habit, Navarre. You just stick to it, and you'll be wearing medals yet."

CHAPTER NINE

THE DOG TEAM RACE

THE pleasure and business of the banquet over, the High School in general and the Bow-Wow Wonders in particular now turned to the one absorbing matter of the race. To them, in spite of the Solomon Derby, the Girls' Race, and others, this would be *the* race until the All Alaska Sweepstakes swept everything else from the thoughts of the entire population of Nome.

While they were prospective rivals in the contest, they were also good sportsmen so that Paul Barrau, Dan Kelly, Gene Terry, and Ted Wilson consulted frequently about the important affairs connected with their equipment, dogs, and methods of training.

Each boy frankly and generously suggested the things he believed the others lacked, with the result

that a few days before the event the Workers to enter it were sure that no smallest necessary detail that might make for a victory for one of them had been overlooked.

A long discussion had taken place over the desirability of thin strips of polished ivory veneer in the bottom of the sled runners, instead of the usual highly burnished steel.

"They say," Gene Terry remarked, "that the ivory slides over the snow as easy as a warm knife cuts through butter, and I'm going to try to get a sled that's fixed that way."

"Don't do it, Gene," Dan Kelly urged. "One year Scotty Allan tried it, and he thought there was more friction. He went back to the steel in all the races afterward. And you can bet your life there was some good reason for it. Steel for me, all right."

"Moose thinks it's best, too," Paul added. "That's why he had it put on mine."

They all agreed upon the use of a small, tightly coiled spring at the bow of the sled, to which the long towline that stretched between the pairs of dogs to the leader was fastened. The spring did away with the sudden jerk that had previously been inevitable when there was an unexpected burst of speed on the part of the team.

In a run of but seven or eight miles to Fort Davis and return, there would, naturally, be no need of blankets, water boots, moccasins for the dogs, nor duplicate harness, so that all extra weight was elimi-

nated from the racing sleds that tipped the scales at about thirty-five pounds.

The choice of colors was another important item, though it was purely a matter of sentiment. Paul was spared any uncertainty in this, as his right to red, white, and blue was undisputed.

"I'm going to wear bright green—a Kelly would *have* to—and you can bet 'the wearing of the green's' going to mean a heap of grief for some of you guys," Dan announced.

"Fox-Maule Ramsay says I can use the Ramsay tartan—my mother's Scotch," Gene remarked proudly. "And Fox did things with that plaid when his kennel came in first and second in 1910 and broke all records for the Sweepstakes. Darned near busted the town, too."

"Well," from Ted, "I asked Matt Lawson if Scotty Allan and Mrs. Darling would mind my taking their White and Gold, 'specially as I'm going to use some of their dogs. And Matt said, 'Sure, kid, go ahead. They'll feel all puffed up over it. You can't have too much of a good thing, and the White and Gold's been mighty lucky.'"

That question, as well as all others, having been satisfactorily settled, there was little to do but to exercise the dogs and study the rules of the race, furnished by the judges. These were patterned after those of the big race, but with the difference in distance and with no hardships to face, only a few of them were really necessary.

All of the young people, and many of the older ones as well, were in a ferment of excitement before the great day arrived.

While Paul, Dan, Ted, and Gene were the favorites, their skill as members of a dog men's order being admitted, the four other entries were also popular. And now having been so much in the limelight, it was whispered that there were two or three "dark horses" in the bunch.

Sam Seton, for instance, had persuaded Fred Ayer to lend his Ayerplane, a team of foxhound crossbreds that were marvels; and Sam had been doing a lot of secret practice out on the tundra, so that he was an unknown quantity to be reckoned with. So, too, were Bob Nichols and Tony Polet; the latter having secured Billy Webb's Beef Eaters, and the former Grant Jackson's perfectly matched team of Irish setters—the Red Devils. These, under Jackson's management, struck terror to the stoutest hearts of the Wonder Worker supporters.

On the other hand, no one was afraid of Bruce Thomas who had, in apparent innocence, accepted Tim Neal's Prince for a leader. For even with four other respectable dogs in the team, Prince's unethical standard of "no tip, no work" was bound to count against Bruce's chance for success.

"Do you think," Paul asked hesitatingly, "that we ought to tell Bruce about Prince—give him an even break with the rest of us? If a leader's——"

"Tell him," Dan fairly snorted, "why, you can't

tell that guy *anything*. I did say I'd seen Tim give Prince cookies for doing what he ought to do without any monkey business. And Bruce just winked and said, snooty as anything, 'Oh, you little Wonder Workers think you know it all, don't you? Well, some of us outsiders 'll show you a trick or two that's worth while when the time comes.' Can you beat it, from a guy that's a regular mutt about dogs?"

After dinner the night before the race Paul went out to feed the dogs and see that everything was in perfect order. He now gloried in a real kennel, since he had acquired a real team. Moose had bought, for a nominal sum, a small shed that stood on the line of the next yard and had built in it box stalls and all of the conveniences of the best type of racing stables. A corridor ran through the building, at the end of which stood the sled, trim and shining, with its big bow of red, white, and blue ribbon.

In spite of the fact that he had found the dogs in excellent condition, Paul slept restlessly. He dreamed of disasters that had never occurred to him in his waking moments; of sick dogs, of the frostbite on Navarre opening into a fresh wound; of going through the ice of Bering Sea, over which the trail led a short distance, near the Fort.

Suddenly he woke with a start. His dogs were howling insistently. Turning on his light, he jumped from his bed and glanced at the clock. It was after one. There was no reason for a disturbance at this hour.

He went through the kitchen and opened the back door, where he had a view of the kennel, on which a street light shone faintly.

At the same moment Moose Jones appeared from his cabin, with his parka thrown over his shoulders, and his feet thrust in felt slippers. Both of them saw a figure dart into the shadow of the neighboring house and disappear in the blackness of the night.

"Anything wrong, Moose?"

"Shut the door. I'll be right back. Going to see what the row's about."

Paul stirred the fire, and stood at the window, nervously peering out into the yard.

Shortly Moose came in with a look of anger on his face that the boy had never seen there before. He was carrying something in his hand. It was a chunk of meat through which a pointed stick was firmly thrust.

"Found it outside the kennel, jest where Navarre's stall would be inside. There's a big knot hole there I've bin goin' t' plug up, but ain't had time t' git to. This here meat's pizened, er I'm a son of a gun. An' some devil's tried t' put it through the hole so's the dog 'd git it."

"Do you think it was——" Paul's voice died away in a whisper. He hated to mention any name at all in connection with a crime that ranked little lower than murder in dog-loving Nome.

"Black Mart, all right," Moose replied briefly. "Knowed his slouchin' figger. An' he was out t' git

Navarre. Every time he's passed the kennel lately he's rubbered so he savvies jest where each dog is."

Moose removed the meat from the stick and placed it carefully in an empty coffee tin. "I'll take it t' Doc Hill at the drug store. Ef it *is* pizened, I'll——"

"I'm sure it was Mart, too. But we can't *prove* it. He could lie about the whole thing."

"No, we can't prove nothin', but there's ways o' makin' Mart Barclay feel ez easy ez a live fish on a hot griddle. Mention the jedge an' the marshal t' him, fer instance. He'd ruther meet up with a bull walrus er a polar bear than say, 'Howdy,' t' them, he's so darned shifty an' has so many things t' keep under kiver."

"Do you think he'll come back again—when things are quiet?"

"Not him. He heered our doors open, an' he knows we'll be on the watch fer any more trouble. You kin go t' sleep now, an' I'll keep my eyes an' ears cocked."

The next morning Paul felt tired, and worse still, worried. If Mart had really tried to poison Navarre, perhaps the dog would never be safe again. Then he realized that Moose never boasted idly, and determined to dismiss all fear from his mind.

The race was set for ten o'clock, and by nine Paul was in the kennel with Moose, giving the dogs a thorough grooming. He was glad they were all of husky gray and sable. In his choice of Tom and Wolf from the Jones team he had been guided by the fact that they matched the others, though Moose had assured

him that he could not make a mistake in any of them. "They all does ez handsome ez they looks; an' nobody cud ask more 'n that."

Paul was giving a last touch to the highly polished sled, and stood back to admire it, when a group of girls appeared in the doorway.

"We're going the rounds," Emma Stanley announced giggling, "before we bet our allowances on any of you and wear your colors. Of course, Mamie and Josie," with a nod toward the Kelly girls, "will have to choose Dan. Couldn't live in the same house if they didn't. But Lida Brown, Mollie Day, and I are free lances, and we're giving all the teams and drivers the once-over before we get in too deep."

"We've just seen Grant Jackson's Red Devils down at Bob Nichols'," Lida Brown remarked enthusiastically, "and they're perfectly sweet. A lovely bronze, exactly the shade of my hair."

"Hates herself, doesn't she?" Emma smiled.

"Well, they're the most becoming dogs in town to my particular style of beauty," Lida replied, "and they're mine. So that's that."

Mollie Day stepped toward Paul. "I decided on you and Navarre long ago," she said softly. "Ever since you were so brave and went for Dr. Sloane in the storm. I have gooseflesh every time I think of what you went through."

For one wild moment Paul had an impulse to tell Mollie he had been a flat tire as a hero; had even sniveled like a baby. But Dan Kelly had told him he

had to go through on the lines laid for him; so he merely answered, with becoming modesty, "Oh, it wasn't so tough, except when Navarre looked like a quitter. *That* did give me an awful jolt."

Mrs. Barrau came in with a gay rosette. "Anyone here wearing the Barrau colors?" she asked smilingly. "If so, it's time to pin them on our jockey."

"Mollie is." Paul motioned toward the girl. "She thinks Navarre is a wonder, even if he doesn't match her hair." Golden curls peeped out from under Mollie's parka hood. "The only dog that would match up with her is the Yellow Peril, and it's lucky for everybody that he's so stuck on himself that he won't work. He'd queer the whole show."

As Mollie fastened the knot on Paul's breast, Moose finished hooking the team to the sled. "All right, folks, let's go. Only ten minutes before the big parade begins."

Paul stepped on the runners. "Mush, Navarre, mush!" The girls scurried to the side of the stable as the team shot out into the street. Then they, with Mrs. Barrau and Moose Jones, followed quickly down Steadman Avenue.

The sky was dull, and though there was the feel of snow in the air it was not cold; five degrees above zero which, without wind, was considered mild for that season of the year.

Instead of starting the teams from the open space before Barracks Square, it had been decided that they should leave on the flat ice of Bering Sea in front of

the Life Saving Station. Captain Ross had loaned all of the flags and pennants necessary to make the approach to the course attractive, and in recognition of this he was made Marshal of the Day; a great honor, which he appreciated.

It was the custom to start the team singly, with an interval of a minute or more between; the lapsed time being considered at the end. But as an experiment the eight High School teams were now to leave together at a given signal.

As always, the whole of Nome was present to speed the youthful racers on their way; but, instead of the tension felt at a Sweepstakes gathering, there was much good-natured joking over the various entries.

"The better the pups, the worse the driver," one old-timer observed squinting critically as Bob Nichols passed with the Irish setters, followed closely by Sam Seton and the Ayerplane.

"Hope you've got your pocket full of cake," someone called banteringly to Bruce Thomas as he ambled along in a leisurely manner with Tim Neal's Prince and four others. Individually these were known to be good dogs of no particular strain; but collectively they certainly gave the idea of a hit-and-miss team of doubtful worth. Moose Jones had dubbed them the "Heinz Hounds."

"Fifty-seven varieties is right," Matt Lawson answered, "but at that they only need a decent leader to be in the running."

"Cake?" Bruce had grinned derisively. "I've got a lot of things you ain't counting on, and don't you forget it."

At last the teams were ranged abreast at the appointed place, a man at the head of each, holding the leader by the collar till the necessary signal should be given.

There was the probability, almost the certainty, that some of the dogs would fight when they reached the spot where the open space merged into the narrow road that led out of town. For there are factions and enmities among dogs as there are among people, and too close quarters are bound to bring these to the surface.

Some dogs are jealous of their trail privileges, and Paul had been trying to teach Navarre the simple ethics of the question, which was covered by a rule that must be strictly observed, or bring hard penalties for an infringement. It read, "A fast team behind a slow one may call for the right of way; the slower one to pull to one side far enough so that the faster, approaching from the rear, may pass easily and safely." Just how easily and safely was left to the conscience of the driver of the slow team and to his ability to make touchy dogs obey his orders.

At all events it was conceded that a fight or two would not be very serious, and would prove the generalship of the boys.

Color ran riot: on the judge's stand, on the sleds, on the backers of the various teams, and on the dogs

themselves. For each leader, at least, sported the colors under which he was racing.

All five of Paul's dogs proudly wore their tri-colored pompons; and they as well as he received an ovation as he drew into position. It was an appreciation of his recent experience in the Kougarok blizzard, given with all the enthusiasm that Alaskans are ever ready to show toward bravery.

"Some kid; some pup," Moose Jones boasted, as he and Matt Lawson stood beside Navarre.

Matt, because of Navarre's relationship to Baldy of Nome and Dubby, took a deep family pride in the leader's possibilities. "Good blood, and it always comes out in a pinch. Baldy never admitted he was licked when he was running on three legs, and every other team ahead of him. Just figured that so long as he was alive there was a chance to win, and he generally did. Yes, sir, good blood all right."

René Haas, who had arrived from his claim near Nugget a few days before, joined the two men. "If they do not come in first," he observed, "it will not be because they've not given everything that is in them. The boy is game, and Navarre has a great name to live up to—one of the greatest of all France."

The sharp note of a bugle rang out its warning that the race was about to begin, as Dr. Hill, the Judge, Charles Garfield, the timekeeper, and Mayor Lomen, the starter, took their places in the stand. The mayor, with an American flag in his hand, was ready.

Several girls and boys not in sympathy with the president of the Wonder Workers made facetious remarks about his being "as green as he looked," at which he grinned amiably. And one high-pitched voice with the well-imitated tone of a parrot screamed out, "Princie want a cracker?" To which Bruce, with a wave of his hand in the direction of the remark, retorted, "He'll get something better 'n that."

Mrs. Barrau and Mollie Day, who had pressed as near to Paul as a rope barrier permitted, called "Good luck, Paul, good luck, Navarre," just as the mayor announced, "Twenty seconds, ten, five, GO!"

The flag dipped, and they were all off, the cheers of the crowd ringing in their ears.

Paul was elated by the flying start they had made. The sun, coming out for a brief instant, had touched the gray coats of his team with a shimmering radiance. They were like a streak of silver, he thought, as they sped over the glittering ice and snow. The best looking of the bunch; and now if they'd only show the clean heels they had in the practice spins, he wouldn't call the Queen his aunt!

He was glad that Navarre hadn't been fussed with all the petting he'd received from bystanders. Poor saps, they didn't know that some racers get so nervous being handled they nearly go nuts before they begin. If Emma Stanley had called Baldy of Nome the names she had called Navarre, he'd have thrown a fit. And if she'd told Jack McMillan that he was a "lamb child," he'd 've up and bit her, which

would 've served her right. Such slush to sling at a decent, self-respecting sled dog. Mollie Day hadn't drivelled like that, even if she did kiss the tip of Navarre's ear when she thought nobody was looking. Anyway, a kiss isn't so bad—for a dog—if he really deserves it. No, Navarre had been polite, but utterly indifferent to everyone but him. A one man dog. What he had always wanted. Gosh, it was great!

Heeding Matt's advice "not to be in a sweat to drive all of the race in the first half," Paul allowed some of the other teams to forge ahead; watching them attentively as they passed.

The Red Devils, under Bob Nichols's guidance, had struck their well-known stride and flashed by without difficulty. So, too, did Billy Webb's Beef Eaters, with Polet at the helm.

Gene Terry was having clear sailing with Seppala's Siberians, led by Esther, one of the baby stars of his stable. The tartan of Fox-Maule Ramsay was being borne worthily, so far.

Ted Wilson, on the contrary, was having trouble, and lots of it. The four youngsters in the body of his team were unaccustomed to any leaders except from the Allan and Darling kennel; and they plainly resented the fact that this exalted position was held by True Blue, a rank outsider. They were making, then and there, a Declaration of Independence from his rule, which resulted in much confusion.

Of the two teams behind him, only one gave Paul any anxiety; the Ayerplane. This was evidently being

checked deliberately; perhaps on the same sort of tip that Matt had given him. The other, Bruce Thomas and his Heinz Hounds, wouldn't, of course, cut any ice. They'd be merely one of the "also rans" in the final summing up. No doubt about that.

After a mile or so Paul decided on a faster gait. It wouldn't do to let the others get too much of an edge. It was all right to allow them to tire their dogs a little at the beginning; but a very big gap would be hard to overcome.

"Let 'er go, Navarre!" The leader easily increased his speed, so that in a few moments he overhauled and passed Ted Wilson and Gene Terry and was abreast of Tony Polet.

"Way," yelled Paul, and Tony instantly swerved to the right. Navarre shot ahead of the Beef Eaters and was making for the Red Devils a few hundred yards beyond. It occurred to Paul, however, that it might be a good plan to let them and Dan's Spuds pace him for a while. That was always an advantage to a team in the rear. Then, when necessary, he was certain he could take the lead and hold it. Navarre's response to his orders was as prompt and precise as that of a lever in the clutch of an expert mechanic. Each command was obeyed to the letter, and the other dogs were like well drilled soldiers under an officer whom they respected and liked.

"It looks good for us," Paul said aloud as he saw the marking pole looming up in the distance. He felt that he almost had the race in his pocket; though he

realized that the *real* driving is done on the home-stretch. At least, that's the way the big men in the Sweepstakes figured it.

Navarre wasn't wearing down at all; and so long as he could put such pep into the game Hope, Hobo, Wolf, and Tom could be depended upon to do their share of the work without grouching. Yes, it sure did look good.

Dan and Bob Nichols drove more slowly as they approached the halfway mark. It was always a problem to swing around this post, where several men were stationed to check them off as they doubled back and headed for town. If two or three teams tried to turn at once there was a chance that the rivals would clash and then there 'd be a free-for-all, pronto. If you swung out too far, there was a loss of time that varied from a few seconds to a few minutes, depending on your skill as a driver. Once or twice, Paul remembered, there had been contests so close that the loss of these few seconds meant the loss of the race. He guessed he'd better keep his eye peeled and see how Bob and Dan made it. Then he could get by himself before he was overtaken by those behind him, all of whom were speeding up considerably.

He heard one of the men call, "Paul Barrau passing the post," as Navarre rounded it neatly; "Sam Seton passing the post," "Gene Terry," "Tony Polet." He did not catch the next name, but when he looked back he could see that it was Bruce Thomas,

and Ted Wilson was far in his wake. Poor Ted: something wrong. Tough luck.

Prince must have been humping himself, or else Bruce was a darned sight better driver than Tim Neal had ever been. Why, any stray malamute in Nome could give Prince the merry ha-ha over his old jog-trot. And now Prince and the Heinz Hounds were ahead of True Blue and the Allan and Darling babies. Something mighty phony about it.

It might be a good stunt for the next mile or so to let Tony, Gene, and Sam take the lead again. Being paced was hot stuff if you knew how to make use of it: letting the other fellows keep your dogs up to the scratch till you were ready to shoot.

The expected "Way, Paul, way," came and Tony and Gene slid by. Sam was holding back. Maybe he was on to the advantage of pacemakers too. But, no; in another moment he also had claimed the right of way and was gone. Paul now carefully gauged the space between himself and the others and then held it steadily.

The Spuds and the Red Devils were visibly losing ground. Dan and Bob had been pressing them too hard from the first. In a short time they would be bunched with Gene, Tony, and Sam. Then Paul felt he must decide on the proper tactics for the finish.

To his surprise Bruce Thomas's voice challenged him. "Clear the track for the Cake-eating Heinz Hounds, and get a move on you."

Automatically Paul gave the command; and as Navarre came "Gee" he gazed at the team overhauling him with amazement and indignation.

Bruce, on the runners, was clinging fast to the sled with one hand and in the other held a long, flexible fishing pole. To the tip end of this was firmly fastened a huge chunk of cake, which dangled just in front of Prince's nose with tempting nearness.

Unbelievable speed on the part of Prince, and an occasional spasmodic jump toward the bait that carried the Hound with him willingly, testified that Bruce Thomas's scheme was working to perfection.

Paul nearly fell off his sled from shock. "Well, I'll—I'll——" Words failed him, however, at this scandalous breach of racing ethics. Yet, try as he might, he could think of no rule against such a proceeding. But it was so darned *cheap*. You'd know Bruce wasn't a Wonder Worker. Why, they'd all just about drop dead when they heard of this business.

It was pretty rotten sportsmanship when a guy has to depend upon tricks. And he'd show the piker what it means to have *real* dogs, who race because they like it and have some pride in their work.

"Step on it, Navarre. That's the girl, Hope. Hi there, Hobo, Tom, Wolf, no loafing on *this* job. That's the stuff!"

Shortly he found himself gaining on the teams ahead, until he was close enough to call the turn on their general condition. He saw the Red Devils swerve out on the tundra to chase some snowbirds.

They were setters and of course birds were always of keen interest to them, except when Grant Jackson was "at the wheel." They lost fully two minutes by this indiscretion; but Gene Terry's Siberians lost much more than that when they were lured from the straight and narrow path by the smell of reindeer in an Eskimo camp just off the trail. It took Gene's strongest language to convince them that a reindeer hunt was not the big feature of the day. Gene was yelling at them something fierce, and Paul wondered that his lungs could stand the strain and not bust.

Dan and Bob had dropped back till they were in a huddle with Gene, Tony, and Sam, the Cake Eaters slightly in the rear but still going strong. It must be darned good cake to keep Prince on the hop like that.

Paul gave another backward glance. Poor old Ted was struggling along, a faint moving blotch, without the ghost of a show. He'd be a good loser, though. That was the code of the Wonder Workers—to be game whether you lost or won.

Nome was once more in plain sight. In a few moments they would leave the trail for the stretch of sea ice. Then a final dash—a short one—and the race was theirs.

This was the right time and place to pass the other teams; to give them his dust, Paul was convinced.

"Come on, pups. Remember the Kruzgamapa. Hit the high spots. Here's where the red, white, and

blue steps out. All together, now, for the Big Mush. Wave your plume, Navarre. Navarre to the front! Full speed ahead!"

The boy's encouraging tone had its effect. The dogs tugged in their harness, every muscle taut. Navarre was going like the wind; the others keeping the pace he set, tirelessly, valiantly.

On they sped, outrunning the Heinz Hounds, the Beef Eaters, and then the trim Siberians, to whom Gene was shouting, "Put, put, put," the Siberian word for "go," with all the vim that still remained in him.

Even the Ayerplane seemed to be doing a tailspin as Paul whizzed by; and Dan's Spuds looked pretty soft boiled. "See you to-morrow when you get in," Paul hurled at Dan; and then, as a last thrust, "Or maybe day after to-morrow."

Only the Red Devils were holding their own, and for a brief while the setters and huskies raced neck and neck in a gallant fight for supremacy. Almost imperceptibly the grays gained a few inches, a few feet, a few yards, and Paul breathed more freely. At last victory seemed within his grasp.

Between the ice hummocks that rose like low walls on either side of the broadening course, Paul began to distinguish black, moving spots: the spectators gathering for the finish. And what a finish it would be! For the Red Devils and the Siberians would pep up, he knew, and be pounding at his very heels, and Dan Kelly's fighting Irish blood was up. But

Navarre was too much for them all. He'd show them—he'd——

There was a sudden whirring sound in the still air, a crash, and a sharp yelp of pain. Navarre dropped in his tracks, a gush of blood from a jagged wound in his side staining the snow about him. The other dogs, quivering with fear, were by their fallen mate.

In an instant Paul was kneeling beside Navarre, trying to stanch the flow of blood with his handkerchief. A rock the size of a man's two fists had been thrown with terrible precision from the shelter of a hummock on the right.

The boy's first impulse was to find the brute who had done this thing. Then, instinctively, he unhooked the wounded dog and lifted him gently into the sled. Help for Navarre was his main concern; the rest would come later—Moose Jones would see to that.

The race was nothing to Paul Barrau now. He was still ahead, but he did not care. Mechanically he called, "Mush." and his team started.

From the rear the setters and the Siberians swept onward—were again abreast of him. It was anyone's race.

He could hear the excited cries of the crowds: "Come on, you Red Devils, come on!"—"Hurrah for the little Put-puts!"—"I'll bet on the huskies—the battleship grays. They'll make the grade."

But the battleship grays, without their commander, wavered and fell back a trifle.

Less than fifty yards to the stand, and barely a foot between Paul and his two rivals in the mad stampede toward the goal. Hobo and Wolf straining in their traces. Good old Hobo; good old Wolf. They were doing their best, but it was a lost cause without their leader.

Paul leaned over and laid his hand softly on Navarre's head. The touch roused the dog. He gave a dazed look about him; then suddenly hurled himself out of the sled. He struggled, sank to his haunches, rose, staggered an instant, and then plunged forward. He was once more at the front, a loose leader.

Though the watchers could not tell just what had happened, they knew that something had gone wrong, and that Navarre was making a desperate attempt to succeed for his master. Cheer after cheer broke from them.

"Stop, Navarre, stop!" Paul cried frantically; but it was too late for the usual obedience. The dog was wild with excitement. Turning slightly he realized that this was his supreme moment. There was a flying leap, a flash of stained silver and sable, and a deafening roar from the men, women, and children who surged toward him.

The boy did not hear the judge's clear voice—Paul Barrau Wins! He did not see his mother, Mollie Day, and Matt Lawson as they came to him eagerly; nor note that Moose Jones was not there. He only

saw, through tear-filled eyes, that just over the line that marks the end of the course stood his weary, faithful team; and before them, on the snowy trail, lay a crumpled heap of gray in a crimson pool: winner of his first race—Navarre of the North.

CHAPTER TEN

OFF TO FRANCE

PAUL BARRAU's heart was heavy, even when everyone crowded around to tell him what a fine race he had run and won and what a wonderful leader Navarre had proved himself.

Matt Lawson, who had lifted Navarre into the sled and laid him on a fur robe, called Dr. Hill from the judges' stand to look at the dog's side.

"It's a deep wound, but there are no ribs broken. Hardly see how he got off so easy. Just keep him quiet, and Matt will tell you what to do better than I. But I'll drop in later. Feel honored to be the physician to so distinguished a patient."

"Paul," Matt remarked as the doctor walked away, "Baldy of Nome or Irish couldn't have made

a better finish; and most anyone else would have been down and out with a hole in him as big as a fry-pan. Who do you think did it? There ain't any avalanches from ice hummocks. It was *throw'n*, all right."

"I don't want to fasten it on anyone—yet. But whoever did it 'll get what's coming to him, if we find out for sure."

After the Wonder Workers and his High School friends had congratulated him warmly, Paul, with his mother and Mollie Day, started for home. He walked beside Navarre, and the dog's eyes were fastened on the boy with pathetic eagerness, as if asking for approval; and Paul constantly leaned over to caress the gray coat, now so matted and stained with blood.

"This 'll show Moose you don't have to do life-saving stunts to be in a class by yourself," he said softly. "This race is one of the sportiest ever pulled off in Nome, and you bet it won't be forgotten in a hurry."

"Do you know where Moose went?" he asked his mother. "He said he'd be waiting to give us the Big Hurrah if we came in first."

"He disappeared just a few minutes before the finish. I looked about for him, but he was not in sight."

"Well, wherever he went, he's had time to get back." Paul was clearly disappointed at Moose's absence in the moment of his triumph.

They made Navarre as comfortable as possible

on the thick straw of his box stall, where Matt, with the skill that comes of unlimited experience, cleaned and bandaged the wound.

The boy unhitched and watered the other dogs and told them how proud he was of the way they had played up to Navarre every second and had come through with the goods when it looked as if the jig was up. "You're regular Sweepstakers," he added, "and I'll give you a dinner that will make your hair curl."

At this instant Moose Jones came into the kennel. He grasped Paul's hand and stood looking down at Navarre with admiration.

"Well, Son, you done some little sprint. The mayor was jest tellin' me 'bout it. An' ef I hadn't bin so doggoned busy I sure would 'a' bin on the firin' line with three rousin' cheers fer you an' the dog that didn't know he was expected t' be beat, and half dead besides."

"Busy!" Paul echoed incredulously. "Busy!"

"Busy's right. Jest when I was gitten up steam fer the 'welcome t' our city,' I seen Mart Barclay slinkin' off behind the ice. An' I says t' myself, 'Moose,' I says, 'there's somethin' queer 'bout this. Folks don't go amblin' away before the end of a race 'thout there's a reason.' An' I knowed that there skunk couldn't hev no *good* reason. So I up an' follers, dodgin' between the hummocks. He didn't look behind him, though; an' when he got fur enough so

he reckoned he was safe, he clumb up on a mound o' snow where he cud pipe the trail. You was comin' like he'd figgered; an' he reached in his pocket, an' before I cud git t' him he let fly a young boulder straight at your team. Then he turned t' beat it back t' town. Well, he bumped inter me, instead; an' it was some bump, I'm tellin' you. I——"

Moose hesitated, and Paul demanded eagerly, "What did you do to him? Where is he now?"

"Well, I won't tell you *all* I done, er your ma and Mollie here might think I hed a peevish an' onforgivin' nachur. But I kin tell you *where* he is 'thout hurtin' nobody's feelin's. He's in the horspital, an' Doc Sloane's with him. I sez t' the Doc, 'You kin try t' git his eyes open, but I wouldn't be in no rush. I reckon he's saw jest 'bout enough fer one day.'" He chuckled with satisfaction. "An' fer a week er so you kin call him Black an' Blue Mart 'thout thinkin' you're color blind."

"The hospital," Mrs. Barrau exclaimed. "Is it serious?"

"Oh, he won't be in more 'n a few days," Moose replied, with no evident regret, "an' I told him when they're through with him there I'll see that Marshal Jordan 'll give him room an' board at the jail fer a spell. Long enough fer him t' kinda git used t' the idee that throwin' rocks at a good dog in a dogs' country ain't gittin' you no bokays like you was pitchin' in a big league game."

Navarre, as an invalid and a hero, received many callers in the next week; and, grouped about his stall, the girls and boys went over the details of the High School Race with never-ending interest.

Since the code of the Wonder Workers suggested frequent visits to those "ill and in affliction," the members of the order were specially attentive and brought Navarre such delicacies as soup meat and steak bones till Paul was obliged to call a halt.

"You guys 'll wreck him. We'd better give some of these swell feeds to the rest of the team. They sure deserve a lot of credit too. They can have anything there is going but *cake*. It pretty nearly turns me inside out now to think of pups and cake together."

The story of the Cake-eating Heinz Hounds had been discussed very fully in Nome. With amusement by some of the older members of the racing set, and with appreciation by frivolous girls who voiced the sentiment that they thought it had been a "terribly cute idea." There had been nothing, of course, but the strongest condemnation for the affair on the part of the Wonder Workers, who decided that in next year's publicity it would be plainly stated that the High School event was a *race* and not a *picnic*. Even Bruce Thomas and Tim Neal would be able to understand *that* hint, rules or no rules.

Shortly the Sweepstakes loomed big on the sporting horizon; and Paul Barrau, Dan Kelly, Ted Wilson, and Gene Terry, having proved that they were dog

men to be considered, shared in much information about the possibilities of the great contest that was rigidly kept secret from mere outsiders.

"Seppala told me," Paul remarked one day as the boys went for a walk, "that he's got the best team he ever had, and you know what that means."

"Well," Dan responded, "Matt Lawson says that if they use Baldy again the Allan and Darling kennel will have another walk-over."

"It's no cinch for them, not if Ed Rohn uses Baldy's son Star," Gene added. "That baby's not asleep at the switch."

And so it went; until, by March, the whole town was once more in a fever over the famous "dog days" of that season.

Toward the end of the month, however, Paul was convinced that there might be another thrilling event for him in prospect.

A letter had come in by one of the last dog-team mails from the Count de Barrau to his daughter-in-law. There was a heavy black border on the envelope and paper, and the familiar writing was more wavering than usual.

Paul read it many times, realizing that the trip to see his grandfather was no longer indefinite but a matter for immediate consideration.

I have [it said] received word from the Company in the Congo that Louis died in November of jungle fever. As there is no telegraph system where he was stationed, far in the interior, the news was sent to the coast by a native

messenger and from there came by one of the infrequent freight steamers, which accounts for the delay.

It is a great shock and grief to me, and I turn to you, my dear Hélène, and to Paul, with more affection and longing than ever.

I feel that I can live but a few years at best, and I ask you to make every effort to come to me for a visit. I only hope you may find this possible. It is the last happiness I ask of life.

There was no complaint at this hard blow, only a deep sorrow; and both Mrs. Barrau and her son felt it was their duty to go in the early summer to France, to be of consolation to one who needed it so sorely.

"Do you think it can be managed?" Mrs. Barrau asked Moose. "Will there be enough money when the clean-up comes?"

"If there ain't," he replied confidently, "I kin fix it at the Miners and Merchants Bank. They know what we got in the Kougarok, and they'll take my note. Git ready t' leave on the first trip out o' the *Victoria*, round the middle o' June."

When Paul told the Wonder Workers the news they were almost as excited over it as he.

"Gosh, but you're lucky," Dan Kelly exclaimed. "I thought I was going some when my father said I could work on a dredge down at Solomon; but this just knocks the spots off my little old vacation. Ships and trains, and castles and moats. Oh, boy!"

"And dungeons and ghosts with clanking chains, and a real count," from Gene.

"Well, don't come back with the big head," Tim Neal remarked warningly.

Paul's face clouded. "It sure does sound swell; but leaving all you fellows and Moose and Navarre and the team won't be so easy. Moose 'll take the dogs up to the claim by the first of July, and that 'll help. They can chase squirrels and rabbits and run loose till near time for us to get back." He sighed. "Three or four months won't be so darned long for any of us."

The anticipated All Alaska Sweepstakes came and went, with its inevitable thrills to the sport-mad little city of Nome. Interest never flagged during the days of preparation, and increased to white heat at the start, when, under a blue April sky, the most famous teams of the whole North headed for the Arctic on their annual epic dash of 408 miles.

The nights were no longer dark, because of the position of the sun in that high latitude; and but few people went to bed properly. They drifted here and there in the streets, met at places of amusement, and in homes to receive the constant telephone reports that were sent in from Eskimo settlements, mining camps, and villages along the way.

A blizzard near Timber plunged everyone into deep gloom; for all knew the dangers of these violent storms in the high mountains and on the trackless, snowy wastes.

Paul Barrau now realized, as he never had before, the hardihood of the mushers who enter these marvel-

ous contests and followed the details of their progress with eager attention.

Soon there was the cheering news of the safe arrival of the entries at Candle, the halfway point; and of their departure after the necessary rest and checking up by the officials of the Kennel Club there.

Later came the uncertainties over the fact that all of the teams were "bunched" at Last Chance, homeward bound; and the breathless suspense when, at Solomon, thirty-five miles or more down the coast, three of the teams were together and "going strong."

Then there was the booming of the guns at Fort Davis, giving the tidings that the last spurt was on; a signal for the crowds to gather again for the finish.

Under waving flags, with bugles sounding loud and clear, with fire bells ringing and whistles blowing, another All Alaska Sweepstakes was over, in seventy-eight hours, forty-four minutes, and fifty-seven seconds; and Leonard Seppala, sweeping over the line with his string of staunch Siberians, was once more proclaimed King of the Arctic Trail.

With the prospect of their coming separation, Paul Barrau spent more time than ever with his dogs. Every few days he had something new to report in the way of their accomplishments; and the more responsive they were, the harder became the thought of the parting now so close at hand.

"Navarre is coming along fine as a loose leader," the boy said one day after a spin on the tundra; "and that's something even Baldy of Nome's never

been, Moose. This afternoon I unhooked Navarre, and he seemed to know just what to do, like in the race. Went ahead of the team, set the pace, and swung round the bad spots in the trail ice. And when he piped it off that Hobo was loafing on the job, saw the trace line was slack, he ran back and nipped him on the ear. Gee, you'd have howled to see the dirty look Hobo gave him. At first Hobo didn't know whether to get sore or take it as a joke. Then he tumbled that Navarre meant business, and he never so much as yipped afterward; pulled the limit all the way home. I guess you'd say that old Dubby's the best loose leader in Alaska, 'less it's Irish, and I'll bet Dub would have been tickled to death that his grandson pulled that loose-leader stuff and got by with it, with a peppy pup like Hobo."

The great fields of ice that cover Bering Sea were slow in breaking up that year. Even the brilliant, warm sunshine, which lasts all day and much of the night, hardly affected the solid pack; though occasionally, early in June, thin streaks of gray-blue water began to appear. These widened gradually until there were "leads" between the floes through which small craft could make their winding way to an anchorage two or three miles from shore. And over the floes, with much skill in avoiding the cracks, dog teams could travel to the side of the big boats and assist in unloading them and carrying the cargoes to town.

Some seasons a strong offshore wind would blow

the whole ice pack out of sight in a few hours; up toward the Arctic Ocean from which it had come in autumn, leaving the sea free for the first time since it had drifted down to form a barrier between Nome and the world "outside." But this year it held fast.

It is an occasion of great rejoicing when distant smoke announces the coming of the long expected first boat. Generally it was the *Corwin*, a freighter, which had once been a famous Coast Guard Cutter; and on the *Corwin* would be the mail, and fresh fruits and vegetables.

Paul had made arrangements with a grocery firm to bring in as much of their consignment as he could with his team, before and after school hours; and with the money to be earned he planned to buy things he needed for his trip.

He and all of the other boys who had made similar contracts acquired what is locally known as "steamer face": an expression of intense expectancy, wrinkled foreheads, and eyes staring out over the horizon for the first glimpse of a coming ship.

"It will be wonderful," Mrs. Barrau remarked, "to have letters only a week or ten days old, instead of from forty to sixty."

But Paul, thinking of the long trail of a thousand miles and more over which the mail-team dogs had plodded so patiently during the cold, dark months of their winter service, rose to their defense.

"I think the dog-team mails are a lot more sporting, coming over ice and snow, crossing mountains, and

halfway down the Yukon. We're darned lucky they've got the job. Nothing else would tackle it. And anyway," with the average boy's indifference to the importance of correspondence, "I guess most of the letters that come in are just as good when they're ninety days old as when they're nine. If I had to answer 'em, I'd wish they *never* came."

Mrs. Barrau smiled. "Oh, I'm not saying anything against the dogs, Paul. Every time I watch a sled pull up with its big pile of mail sacks I'm thankful, too, that they're on the job, as you say. I'm the last person to forget what they mean here; and now I say, 'Thank you,' every time I pass one. To myself, of course."

"You might say it out loud, if you wanted to, and nobody'd think it was queer. Albert Fink lifts his hat to Dubby when he meets him. Says after he traveled with him on the trail he's willing to treat him as an equal and a friend. Maybe people 'll be taking their hats off to Navarre, some day."

"It wouldn't surprise me at all," his mother answered seriously; for she realized that the boy's interest in his dogs was one of the really big things in his life. It was teaching him self-control and kindness, besides giving him a sense of responsibility, which was a fine thing for him to learn so early.

The *Corwin* was sighted at three o'clock in the morning: a tiny black speck in the distance, her hull almost hidden by floating bergs. The thin gray wreath curling up from her stack into the clear air gave an

unmistakable sign that caused men, women, and children to dress hastily and hurry down to the beach to watch her slow approach. Since there was no darkness, the twilight ending as the dawn begins, the hour made but little difference, in view of the importance of the happening.

Paul had again borrowed Wolf and Tom from Moose Jones; and he, with Dan Kelly, Gene Terry, and Ted Wilson appeared very promptly on the scene so that they might do as much hauling as possible before time to go to school.

"Gosh," Gene remarked to the others, "this don't look too good to me. What if we get on ice that's rotted so bad it cracks off and goes floating away on its own hook? We might be left hanging over the edge, or get dumped into the water; and Bering Sea's no swell swimming hole, I'll tell the world."

"Well, we took the job, and we've got to take the chances," Dan answered sternly. "And even if we were dumped in, Tom Ross would come after us with a dory from the Life Saving Station. Ever since the race, folks think we've got a lot of class, and they'll be piping us off from the beach to see how we tackle it. I'll say," with a sigh, "being famous ain't always such a cinch."

"I'll break trail," Paul volunteered. "Navarre's just like Baldy and Dubby; knows when ice isn't strong enough to hold and won't take a sled on it. I'll bet he can smell a crack before it cracks. So you guys follow me."

Navarre, who had been unhooked to act as a loose leader, picked his way carefully between huge ice ridges and around soft spots, so that Paul was not worried. After they had gone a mile or so without encountering any trouble, the dog suddenly stopped short and ran ahead a few hundred yards. He turned first to the right, then the left, pausing now and then to sniff. Returning to his team he placed himself before it, and Paul saw that he was in a frenzy to be away.

When he reached the place where he had been scouting, Paul heard an ominous grinding sound; and a narrow rift appeared just beyond them, not much wider than a man's arm. At that instant Gene called excitedly, "The ice is breaking right back of me, and I'll have to hustle. How is it ahead?"

"Breaking here, too."

Navarre tried to induce his mates to cross to the main field while it was still possible. It would be but a single leap for them, while the sled would span the opening easily.

Hobo and Hope had been hitched directly behind Navarre; and because Hope was timid and Hobo hated cold water, they did not respond to his frantic efforts toward action. The rift was increasing, and Navarre had to think quickly. He bit Hobo sharply on the flank, and Hobo knew well what it meant. Then he lunged himself against Hope, from the rear, fairly pushing her into motion. Wolf and Tom, to whom this thing was no novelty, did not need any

hints; and after a moment of suspense they were all safe on the firm ice once more.

Dan's team, from the Allan and Darling kennel, and accustomed to following a good leader without question, made the jump a pace or so behind Paul; but Gene and Ted were still in a dangerous position.

Their borrowed teams, not quite confident of the boys' driving, waited uncertainly while the crack was slowly widening.

"Back, Navarre, back!" Paul shouted. The dog caught his meaning and dashed off, placing himself in front of Ted's dogs. Ted lost no time in snapping Navarre's trace to the breast straps of his own leader; while Gene fastened his to the back of Ted's sled. Both boys held fast to their handlebars so that, however sudden the jolt from the coming leap, they would not be dislodged.

They were not a second too soon. For, as they stood beside Paul, the floe they had just left broke completely off and sank with a terrific splash, coming up some distance away in a swirl of angry water.

"Great guns!" Ted gasped. "That was a close squeak. Much obliged for the steer, Navarre. You, too, Paul. But this is no place for throwing bouquets. We'd better toddle while the toddling's good."

Shortly they pulled up on the edge of the more solid ice, where the *Corwin* lay at anchor, and were busy loading their sleds with boxes, kegs, and crates.

The boys made two trips before school and several after; and for three days worked so hard that even

sitting at a desk to study between times seemed a rest to them now.

The money they received was a welcome addition to their vacation fund; and Paul was glad that the earning capacity of his dogs had justified his possession of them completely. Life saving and racing were the high spots, but work was the real test. They had, as Moose said, "brought home the bacon," and that was what counted.

In another week the *Victoria* nosed her way to an anchorage beside the *Corwin*. The ice was breaking up rapidly, leaving much open sea, so that small boats were able to reach both vessels, and dog teams were abandoned for freighting.

Captain John O'Brien of the *Victoria* expected to unload her cargo and leave within a few days of his arrival, so that the time was a busy one for the Barraus.

Now that the date was actually set, Paul dreaded going more than ever. He was leaving the only home and the only friends he had ever known for people and places he might not like at all.

"Every time I think of my grandfather," he confided to the boys, "I get cold feet. His picture looks like he'd drop dead if I said 'gosh' or 'doggoned' in front of him."

"Well," Dan said encouragingly, "I'll bet you don't know those words in French, so you'll be pretty safe. Besides, there's the dungeons and ghosts. They ought to make you happy. I wish I had the chance to see a real ghost. It would be keen."

"I'm not hankering after any," Gene admitted frankly. "At night every time I go past the warehouse on Steadman Avenue where a man was hung in early days, I scoot by like mad. I mean I used to, before I joined the Wonder Workers, who ain't supposed to be scared of anything. Of course, I know there ain't any ghosts, but you feel creepy just the same."

At four o'clock on the day of sailing, a big crowd had gathered on the shore to bid farewell to the outbound passengers. Gray clouds hung low over the town, and there was a strong wind, chilled by the ice that still remained in Bering Sea. Not a cheerful day, Paul thought, for leave-taking.

A group of girls and boys had come up to the Barrau house to walk with them down to the beach, the baggage having been sent earlier in an express wagon.

At the last moment Paul went into the kennel to say a few parting words to his team and give some consolation bones he had been saving for them. He lingered by Navarre's stall, hesitating to make the final break.

Dan Kelly's voice roused him. "The *Vic's* tooted a coupla times—means she'll go in half an hour. Three times and out. Kiss 'em good-bye, kid, and make it snappy."

Paul's eyes were suspiciously red when he appeared, and he left the door open so that he could catch one more glimpse of the dogs before he turned the corner. They were tugging hard at their chains and whimpering pitifully, seeming to realize that something un-

usual and mournful was happening. Now he wished he had shut the door: it was tough to have to remember their bewildered looks of disappointment.

The Wonder Workers, Mollie Day, and the Kelly girls chatted gayly as they went quickly along the Avenue.

"Don't forget to send us postcards."—"Tell us what a live count's like."—"Be sure to let us know if there are any *real* dogs in France."

It was all a confused blur of voices to Paul, as he and his mother and Moose Jones took their places in the big dory that was launched through the surf to take them to the *Defiance*. This power boat, lying in deeper water, was ready to make the rest of the journey to the *Victoria*.

In his hand Paul carried a box just given him by Gene Terry. "Some presents from the Workers and the girls. Thought you'd like to open 'em on board when things kinda slump."

Paul nodded, unable to express his thanks. The slump had already overtaken him.

As the dory, rowed by a life-saving crew, reached the *Defiance* and he climbed aboard, Paul saw a gray streak dash through the crowd on the beach and stand, panting and excited, at the edge of the water.

It was Navarre, his chain broken and a small bit of it hanging to his collar. The frantic efforts of Dan, Ted, and Gene to stop him were useless, as he struck out through the high breakers toward the launch which had already commenced to move ahead slowly.

Paul hung over the low side in an agony of fear, while the dog, buffeted by the waves and small icebergs, came steadily on.

The boy called desperately to Captain Ross who was near him in the bow. "Don't leave him, Tom. He won't go back, and he can't keep up with us. Please don't——"

"All right, Son, all right." The signal to stop was given at once.

A woman, shivering in her furs, turned to Captain Ross, sturdy and imposing in his blue uniform. "We're late already," she snapped, "and Captain O'Brien will be furious. What do you mean by keeping us in this cold for a miserable dog that ought to have better sense? I'll catch my death—and I'll report you."

Tom Ross regarded her with ill-disguised contempt. "My job is life saving, madam, and I'd just as soon save a good dog as some people. The government don't limit me; and we'll get that pup on the *Defiance* if it takes the rest of the day, passengers or no passengers. And," he added confidently, "Johnny O'Brien would hold up the *Vic* to save anything alive from drowning—unless," he chuckled as he recalled the captain's one aversion, "it was a black cat. He might get peeved about that."

Navarre was hauled up by Moose Jones and two of the crew. He gave a bark of joy as he found Paul, who led him to a sheltered spot, where the dog crouched contentedly beside him.

In less than fifteen minutes they were abreast of

the *Victoria*, and the parting of the ways had come. Paul blinked back the tears that were so near the surface. He thrust the end of Navarre's broken chain toward Moose.

"I know you'll be good to him—to all of 'em. It won't be for long—not so very." He did not trust himself to say anything more, but turned to give a caress to Navarre, whose wet coat was icy to the touch; yet not much colder than Paul's trembling hands.

The boy climbed up the companionway behind his mother, and standing by the rail heard the bell of the *Defiance* give the order to back away. Moose Jones and Tom Ross smiled and shouted the usual last messages. Then a howl, one of utter desolation, broke from Navarre. His prick ears were no longer erect, as if he had ceased to listen for a beloved voice. But his faithful eyes never left Paul's face, which peered at him over the ship's side; and his tail, bedraggled and dripping, waved more and more slowly till it stopped altogether. Rigidly he waited for some word—the picture of uncomprehending defeat. His master was leaving him, as once Sam Milton had left him to loneliness and a longing he could not express. What did it mean?

The boy darted into his cabin and flung himself into his berth, no longer choking back the sobs that shook him.

What was France—what was *anything* now? Navarre had not understood.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE DE BARRAUS

THE voyage for the first two days was a dull one. Mrs. Barrau was seasick; and while Paul proved a good sailor, a cold rain made it too uncomfortable for him to remain on deck. He knew most of the passengers, however, and found a pleasant companion in Tim Dawson, an old miner who had "made his pile" as he expressed it, and was going outside to buy a ranch in California, the dream of most Alaskans. Tim had with him his husky leader, stiff with rheumatism and nearly blind.

"Some folks," Tim remarked as the boy sat with him in his stateroom, "think I'm sorta off to take this old wreck with me when I might have taken a fine-looking young dog just as well. But when I remember what Kobuk's been to me, I'd just as soon have de-

served a brother. Why, we've worked and starved together, and all he asked was to be with me. Now, when I've got the dust, he's going to be comfortable the rest of his life."

Paul's thoughts flashed to the picture of Navarre, swimming through the icy waters of Bering Sea to the *Defiance*; the last despairing wag of his tail, the last mournful wail. Hastily he bent over to examine Kobuk's collar, on which was a silver plate with his name and, engraved beneath it, "A Faithful Friend."

"They're faithful friends," he said huskily, "and I guess all Alaskans feel as we do about 'em. They're just like your family."

After the *Victoria* had gone through Unimak, the narrow pass between two of the Aleutian Islands that separates Bering Sea from the North Pacific, the weather was better; and Paul visited much with Captain O'Brien, the most popular captain on the run. From him the boy heard tales of adventure in the South Seas, along the coast of Africa, and in the ports of India. Gosh, it was great to have knocked around the world like that, and he wasn't so sorry, now, that he was going to France.

If only it were not for missing Moose and the Workers; and—his heart would sink—for missing Navarre, Hope, and Hobo just as much. The others *knew* he was coming back to them; but he could still see Hope and Hobo tugging at their chains and Navarre making his last desperate effort not to be left behind. He guessed having your feelings hurt and not under-

standing why was one of the toughest things a guy or a dog has to put up with in life.

Paul was sorry when, at Seattle, he parted with the captain, Tim Dawson, and Kobuk, though he was delighted with the stay of a few days in the first real city he had ever seen. The big buildings, the gardens filled with flowers, the gleaming lights on the hills at night were very unlike the little graveled yards and the bleak tundra back of Nome; but at that Nome was home, and often he longed for it.

Then came the trip across the continent; Chicago and New York, with their skyscrapers and their throngs of bustling people; people who were all strangers and all intent on their own affairs, in which he had no part. It was absorbing, but mighty lonesome, too.

How different it would be if the gang could have shared these wonders with him. After all, nothing is worth while without friends.

One afternoon, when his mother came into Paul's room at the hotel, after shopping and attending to their tickets, she found him stamping some postcards. They were all of dogs: Pomeranians, Pekinese, and toy terriers, winners in a recent International Dog Show.

"I'm sending these to let the bunch see what are considered dogs in this burg," he explained scornfully.

His mother picked up one of a tiny creature of the Mexican hairless breed, under which was written, "This is a dog."

The card was addressed to Moose Jones, and Paul had added, "Show it to Navarre, if you think he won't bite you for trying to fool him. He'll know it *ought* to be a rat."

Mrs. Barrau looked up smiling. "Paul, you're a hopeless Alaskan. You aren't sending any photographs of the Park, or Wall Street, or any of the things they don't see there. Just dogs." Then she laughed. "You're like the old prospector who went outside after twenty years in the North, where he had eaten pork and beans till he hated the sight of them. He used to dream of all the fresh things he'd have when he could. But when he went into a restaurant in Seattle, and read over the bill of fare he was so overcome by the variety that he said to the waiter, 'Well, I guess, pardner, you'd better bring me five dollars' worth of pork and beans.' Sending pictures of dogs to Nome is a case of 'coals to Newcastle.'"

"Oh, well, they see everything else in the movies; but they don't know yet how far ahead of New York Nome is on dogs. The Wonder Workers 'll be prouder than ever. Why, even Tim Neal's Prince and the rest of the Cake-eating Heinz Hounds 'ud show up like top-notchers here."

Paul was thrilled by the excitement of sailing in a big liner. The crowded docks, the stewards and cabin boys running about with flowers, fruit, and boxes, the many gold-braided officers, and the deafening noise, made the memory of his leavetaking on the wind-swept beach in the North seem a somber one indeed.

He dashed off a note to Dan Kelly, to be taken back by the pilot. "You could hang the old *Vic* on the side of this ship and think she was a lifeboat." But, impressed as he was, he could not help wishing there was someone to wave good-bye to his mother and to him. He felt better, however, when a pretty girl who stood beside him said wistfully, "It makes you homesick if you don't know anyone. When Father and I left San Francisco by way of Panama there were lots of friends to see us off; and paper streamers and confetti and everything."

Paul agreed about the homesickness; and before he realized it, he was describing his own departure from Nome, and his pals there, though he could not speak yet of the one who had not understood his going.

The weather for most of the voyage was calm, and the pretty girl, Blair West, and Paul were soon asked to join in deck sports with other young people, which made the time pass quickly.

Because he had lived in such a remote place and had gone through such unusual experiences, Paul often found himself the center of an interested group that begged for stories of adventure and of the sled dogs and races that seemed to them to belong to another world. He was always glad to give the praise they deserved to the dogs of the North and to let their splendid records be known.

One old lady with a fluffy poodle, with its hair cut in circles, and wearing a blue satin bow, insisted upon presenting her "Fifi" to Paul, and telling "Fifi"

all about the "terrible, wild wolf-dogs" he had driven. Yes, *driven!* "Isn't Mother's itsy-bitsy babums glad he doesn't have to pull any horrid old sleds?"

In the diary letter Paul was writing to the Workers he added for that day:

She even put the thing in my lap and asked me what I thought of her "precious lambkin." Gosh, I *couldn't* tell her what I thought without giving her an awful jolt. Besides, poor Fifi couldn't help being that kind; and I felt so sorry for him I came darned near jerking the bow off his collar and yelling right out loud, "For Pete's sake give it a chance. Likely it's got *some* feelings, if it does look like a kid's Christmas toy." Think of any dog having to wear ribbons, unless they're racing colors. Of course, I didn't say that, but I had to make a quick get-away to keep from it; and you can bet I side-stepped that dame good and plenty afterward. It pretty near made me seasick.

At Cherbourg the Barraus parted from their traveling companions with sincere regret. Paul was willing to admit, even, that all the classy girls and real guys were not in Alaska; though none of the fellows nor Blair West stacked up very high beside Dan, Ted, Gene, and Mollie Day.

Mrs. Barrau felt that they should leave all sight-seeing until they were ready to return to America. Now the one important matter was to go to Count de Barrau as quickly as possible. So they remained only a night in Paris and caught a train the next morning for St. Die, the nearest large town to their destination.

A telegram had brought them the news that they would be met there and driven to the château, which was only a few miles beyond.

"I don't wonder," Mrs. Barrau said to Paul as she looked at the beautiful scenery through which they passed, "that your father spoke with so much affection of France. How he must have longed for it in our bleak winters in the North."

"But he had you, Mother, and that 'd make up for everything he'd left. You're such a peach," he added shyly.

Helen Barrau smiled, though her eyes were moist. "And he had you, and such friends as Moose, and the free life he'd always wanted. He never regretted becoming an American citizen, though naturally his home ties were strong."

As they approached St. Die Paul's anticipation was tinged with the dread that had been with him from the moment they had actually decided on the trip. Dread of the stately grandfather whose picture hung in the little cabin in Nome, of the strangers he was to meet whose ways would be so different from his own, even of the château, which might, after all, be a disappointment.

"Do you suppose there'll be any dogs there, Mother?"

"Probably. Most people in the country have them."

"But perhaps," gloomily, "they'll be like Fifi. I couldn't stand that."

"No," Mrs. Barrau laughed, "I'm sure they'll be

quite unlike him. Fifi isn't a man's dog; though I have always heard that poodles are intelligent."

"Maybe; but, just the same, I'd hate like blazes to go anywhere with one of 'em and be seen." He relapsed into a depressed silence.

In St. Die they were met by an elderly man in a worn livery, who looked searchingly at all of the passengers as they left the train.

Mrs. Barrau and Paul were unmistakably foreigners, so he stepped up and spoke to them in French. "You are for the Château de Tréville?"

Mrs. Barrau nodded.

"I am Pierre Dupont. Monsieur le Comte has sent me for you."

To his evident relief Mrs. Barrau answered in his own tongue, as she and her son followed him to a battered car parked behind the station. After stowing away their bags, Pierre gave instructions about the trunk which was to be brought later by cart.

The drive over smooth roads bordered by great plane trees was through a gently rolling country, made bright by scarlet poppies and blue cornflowers. But the thing that delighted Mrs. Barrau and Paul most was the nearness of the mountains—the Vosges—that towered above them; their summits lost in fleecy clouds.

They crossed swift streams and went through several villages that were drowsy and peaceful in the warm July sunshine.

Paul thought of the straggling little settlements to

which he was accustomed, huddled on the desolate tundra or above the dreary shores of Bering Sea. These were regular picture postcard villages, and Mollie Day and the Kelly girls would hardly believe they were real.

At length Pierre pointed to a group of buildings in the distance. "The château. We have reached the estate now."

The surrounding fields showed signs of neglect; but the moat and the drawbridge were there, to Paul's delight. And when they drove over it he felt that at least one thing was as he had imagined.

To be sure, the bridge had evidently not been raised for ages; for its huge wrought-iron chains were rusty, and the stone wall that ended in massive pillars from which it hung was covered with moss. The moat itself held pools of black water with a thin stream trickling between, that kept them from being stagnant.

The winding drive was through a tangled garden, where roses and other flowers were no longer confined by the untrimmed box hedges that had once made it formal.

There was a sundial on the lawn, with shadows flickering through dense shrubbery upon it; and here and there were marble benches stained by age and the weather.

The château itself was a two-storied rambling building with lower spreading wings on either side, its gray stone walls covered with ivy. Before it, on

the terrace, the count waited to greet his son's widow and his grandson, the last of the De Barrau line.

He had been a tall man in his youth, but was now bent with his years and illness. His abundant hair was white, as was his military mustache and a close-clipped pointed beard. He leaned heavily on a stout cane, and Paul saw that one sleeve was fastened flat against his breast. Then he recalled that his mother had told him of the loss of an arm in the Franco-Prussian War.

The old man was much affected. He kissed Helen Barrau tenderly and turned to Paul. He grasped the hands of the boy, who was taller than he, and then kissed him also on both cheeks. Paul was glad the gang was not there to see it, nor Moose, whose parting had been a tight grip and a hasty, "Well, so long, kid. Be good t' yourself."

Through the great doorway two elderly people, a man and a woman, came shyly. Count de Barrau nodded affectionately toward them. "Georges and Marie, my faithful servants, of whom I have written you. They will show you to your rooms on the second floor. I am on this floor. I find," sadly, "that I am not strong enough to go up and down easily. I will wait for you here. Dinner is at seven."

The great hall through which they passed was paved with stone; and over a huge fireplace at the end was carved a mailed fist holding a heart under which was the motto of the De Barraus: "Loyal unto Death."

A armor, quaint weapons, a stag's head, and other hunting trophies were the only decorations on the walls, which were paneled with dark oak.

The stairs were wide and uncarpeted, as was the upper corridor, which ran from the front of the house to the back, with narrower ones leading to the wings.

Everything was spotlessly clean, but bare and severe. Mrs. Barrau remembered that Gaston had told her of the forced sale of art treasures and priceless furniture when the family fortunes dwindled.

Paul's room contained little besides the high bed with brocaded hangings, worn and dull, three or four stiff chairs, and a table on which were a lamp and a vase of flowers, the only gay note to be seen. In a corner was a washstand with a pitcher and bowl. Just like Nome, Paul thought as he changed his clothes. There was a tap at his door, and his mother came in. Gee, but she looked pretty in a new white dress. He guessed his grandfather wouldn't be surprised that his son had picked out an American girl to marry.

They found Count de Barrau still on the terrace. He rose with difficulty as Georges appeared to announce dinner.

The meal was served in a small room opening off what had been a banquet hall. "It is too large for only a few of us," the count said as they seated themselves at a table covered with delicate but almost threadbare linen, and decorated with roses massed in a beautiful silver centerpiece. There were four silver candlesticks of the same pattern, in which tall wax

candles were burning; the only light used, except those in bronze sconces above carved sideboards.

"We are far behind the times here," their host explained. "No electricity, no running water, no telephone. But at that I hope you will be comfortable. We will try to make up for those things by the warmth of our welcome. I am glad that you both speak French so well; it will make your visit so much more agreeable in every way. My English is so poor that I only use it when necessary."

The conversation almost died out at times; there were so many things to be said, so many questions to be asked, that no one knew just where to begin. That would all come later, however, Mrs. Barrau knew, when the first strangeness had worn away.

"This silver—what a wonderful design," she remarked presently. "I have never seen anything like it."

Count de Barrau's face brightened. He was proud of what possessions he still retained. "It came down from the only member of the family who was not guillotined during the revolution in 1793. That Gaston de Barrau buried all of the treasures in the orchard," he waved toward the low windows which overlooked the grounds, "and sought shelter in England. When he came back and accepted the change in the government, his estates were restored to him. But," with a sigh, "they are no longer what they were in his day."

Paul was delighted with this family history. It would be keen to write to the Wonder Workers that

his ancestors had their heads cut off because they had been loyal to their king. Sounded like the history stuff they had studied at school. Classy, he'd say.

During a pause Paul remarked hopefully, "René Haas, a young Frenchman who used to live near here, told me in Nome that you have some dungeons."

"Oh, yes," the count smiled. "Dungeons and an oubliette."

"Oubliette?"

"Yes, a narrow shaft in a passageway, leading down to a well. When it was desirable to be rid of prisoners and leave no trace, they were forced to walk over a trapdoor above the shaft, which opened and dropped them into the water beneath. They had no chance for their lives as the water was deep and the side of the shaft absolutely smooth. Not a pleasant way they had of disposing of unwelcome guests in the Middle Ages. There is no water in the well now, but one of the men will open the trap so that you may look into it if you are interested."

Really the château wasn't so bad after all, Paul reflected. The moat and drawbridge, the beheaded relations, and now an oubliette. He and the bunch had read thrilling tales of tortures by robber barons, and had often discussed which one they'd choose if they had to. Now here was a brand-new one to spring on the Workers. And, to add to his satisfaction, there was a loud barking somewhere near, with a chorus of shriller but still lusty yelps.

"You have dogs—too?" He leaned forward eagerly.

"What kind?" He was sure they were not Fifs; for these were real barks, not whining nor peevish yipping.

"They are German shepherds; a mother and five or six puppies. Pierre, whose father, grandfather, and great-grandfather have lived on the place, uses them in taking care of his sheep, which are in a pasture behind his cottage. The dogs are valuable, and he expects to sell the young ones at a good price. They are now several months old, and he is teaching them, with their mother's help, to mind the flock. To-morrow he will show you how cleverly they work."

"What are their names?"

Count de Barrau laughed. "The mother is Jeanne d'Arc; Pierre named her. He calls her Jeanne; but the names of the others I do not know."

Paul could hardly wait to see Jeanne and her family. A man he had met once in Nome, who had left a ranch in Texas to come to Alaska, had told him of the great intelligence of these sheep dogs; had even said, which Paul doubted, that they were smarter than huskies. Well, he'd find out now for himself.

When he went to sleep that night his dreams were filled with dogs that herded flocks, that carried mail, that saved lives. And one, with hurt eyes and a dripping icy coat, howled so mournfully that he woke up with a start to find that it was morning and the sun was pouring in his open windows.

After coffee and rolls, which Georges brought to his room, a more substantial breakfast not being served till noon, Paul went out to explore the place. He

walked through the gardens, almost choked with weeds, and along the shaded avenue till he came to the drawbridge, which he examined carefully as he crossed it.

The parting gift of the Wonder Workers had been a Kodak. He'd take snapshots of everything; it 'd save a lot of writing.

Skirting the stone-buttressed banks of the moat, he circled it and made his way through the meadow to the cottage where Pierre Dupont lived with his wife Julie and his son Justin, a sturdy youth of twenty-one.

The dogs gave notice of his approach, and Pierre and Justin came out to greet him. He was taken into the simple but neat home to meet Julie. She curtsied and made a formal little speech. "I knew your father, Monsieur Gaston, long before he was your age. You are like him, only more tall, more strong."

Paul's interest in Jeanne d'Arc and her offspring pleased Pierre and Justin, who took pride in their accomplishments and in the reputation they had acquired in the neighborhood.

Jeanne, after a slight hesitation over the advances of an outsider, came toward the boy, followed closely by her entire litter. Like her, they were of a gray-tan shade with darker backs, and lighter breasts, and erect ears. Might be short-haired malamutes, Paul decided, as to appearance; but they might be mighty different in disposition and instincts.

"She is not always so amiable with strangers," Justin announced. "She knows you like her, and she

will be a good friend. She never makes mistakes. This evening we will show you how splendidly she handles the sheep when we take them from the pasture into the pens for the night."

Pierre or Justin acted as chauffeur when there was an occasion for it, and did all of the other work on the estate, which was far too much for them to do thoroughly. Paul made up his mind to help them; it would be a lot more fun than hanging round the gloomy old château under the eyes of the dead and gone De Barraus whose portraits hung in the stately rooms and long hallways.

They were husky guys, all right, whether they were in armor or all dolled up in wigs and lace ruffles; and Paul was especially interested in that Paul de Barrau who had been a famous captain under King Henry of Navarre. The picture was dim with age, but the coat of mail gleamed silver against the dark background, and plumes shone white from the helmet that shaded a stern yet kindly face. Well, with this Paul de Barrau and Baldy of Nome as ancestors, he guessed that he and his Navarre would have to pull some good stuff to be in their class.

The days passed more quickly and more happily than Paul had anticipated. He spent most of his time with Justin, digging and planting, and tending the sheep night and morning with Jeanne and the puppies.

He and Justin made frequent trips to the village of Tréville, only two miles distant, in a heavy farm cart drawn by Nero, a huge black Normandy stallion.

This superb creature had been a gift to the count from a friend who bred draft horses not only as a fad but as a profitable business.

The end of July and the beginning of August brought hot, sultry weather. Mrs. Barrau and her father-in-law seemed content to sit by the hour in the fragrant, shady garden, or to go about in the shabby car with Pierre to the attractive points in the countryside.

They were glad that Paul was finding enough to do to keep him from homesickness. "Besides," Count de Barrau said, "I want him to know and love this place which will some day be his."

Paul never read the weekly local paper, nor the one that came daily from Paris; but he noticed that the count could hardly wait for their arrival now. And while his daughter-in-law read them aloud to him there was a troubled look on his face.

"Conditions everywhere seem very serious to me," he said one afternoon, as she laid aside a copy of *Le Gaulois*. "All of Europe is like a powder magazine. A spark, and there would be an explosion that would rock the whole world." His dim eyes clouded as he glanced at his empty sleeve. "I had hoped never to see another war; but if one comes and the honor of France is at stake, she will go into it. She——" He did not finish, but fell into a gloomy silence.

"I trust it is not as serious as you think," Mrs. Barrau replied. "Surely we have grown civilized enough to settle our difficulties by some other means."

But as the time passed the situation grew more complicated and more tense. Paul heard much of it down at the Dupont cottage, where it was discussed at length.

Then came the day when German troops marched across Belgium toward Paris. All hope of peace was gone, and war was formally declared.

Paul and Justin, wildly excited, brought the news from Tréville to the château. As the old count listened he leaned more and more heavily on his cane, and his voice shook with emotion. "It is as I feared, and France will fight. We are near the German border, and it is not safe." He turned to Helen Barrau. "You and Paul must leave at once for America, while it is still possible. I will make all arrangements."

She went to him and laid her arm about his shoulder. "In that case you will need us more than ever. Our place is here, and I am sure Paul agrees with me. We——"

It was the biggest moment of his life, the boy knew. Bigger even than when he had rescued Navarre from Mart Barclay, had started for the doctor for Moose Jones or won the High School Race. He interrupted his mother enthusiastically: "You bet your life we'll stay." Then, seeing the count's puzzled expression, he drew himself up and said in his best French, with all the pride that other Paul must have felt when he pledged his allegiance to Henry of Navarre, "Don't forget, Grandfather, that I'm a De Barrau too; and we'll stay with you in France."

CHAPTER TWELVE

NAVARRE, COMMANDER IN CHIEF

TO PAUL BARRAU there was a thrill in the very word war. He had yet to see the tragic side.

Headquarters for that sector were established just outside Tréville, and General Chastaigne, who was in command, had been a lifelong friend of Louis de Barrau, who had died in the Congo. He came frequently to the château, and Paul and his grandfather returned the visits in the car, which the boy had learned to drive.

They met Captain Victor Chastaigne, the general's nephew, a dashing young aviator whom Paul admired greatly. When his duties permitted, Victor was always willing to show Paul about the camp and explain many things of interest.

Mrs. Barrau had suggested to the count that they

offer the château to the government as a small hospital, and the offer had been gratefully accepted. She, Marie, and Julie were able to do the nursing for a limited number, and Georges and Pierre, who were too old to enter the army, assisted. Justin was already with a regiment near the Belgian front; and the tasks that had been his were turned over to Paul, who found the days not long enough for them.

At night, worn out with work, he would sit with his mother and Count de Barrau on the terrace, listening to their comments of the progress of events till he could no longer keep his eyes open. Then he would go to his room, too tired either to think or dream, but happy in the realization that he was doing all he could for his grandfather and, through him, for France. Oh, if only he could get into the thick of it, accomplish something really worth while. But he was too young, and he was an American. There was no chance.

By September there were a number of wounded soldiers at the château, there was the distant rumble of artillery, airplanes whirring constantly overhead, and near-by villages bombed till they were but a mass of smoldering ruins.

The thrill had gone, giving place to horror and grim determination. Motor lorries and troops of marching men wound their way along the dusty roads. Daily there were increasing hordes of despondent peasants who passed, fleeing from their devastated homes. They drove jaded horses hitched to farm wagons into

which they had piled their families and their few remaining possessions. Crates of chickens and ducks hung over the sides, and sometimes a little band of sheep or pigs, herded by thin shepherd dogs, straggled behind. Everywhere were the crying of children and the dry-eyed despair of women.

There was no excitement even in this. Just a silent resignation to their misery that brought a lump into Paul's throat. Gee, he had no idea anything could be so terrible; and terrible as they seemed then, they grew steadily worse. More wounded men were brought to the château, more towns were destroyed, and there was more desolation on every side.

One day, when General Chastaigne drove over, he had with him a young officer. The general smiled as he stepped from his car. "I have brought you an old friend, Paul. He is, also, the son of an old friend of mine."

Paul could hardly believe his eyes. It was René Haas who came forward to greet them.

"How—why——" Paul began eagerly.

"I suppose it does seem strange," René replied, "but you remember I told you in Nome that I was a reserve lieutenant in the Alpine Chasseurs. And of course I returned at once when the news of mobilization was cabled to me."

The boy questioned René eagerly: "Did you see Moose Jones before you left, or any of the gang? And my dogs?"

"Yes," René laughed, "I saw everyone and brought

many messages. And I made a special trip with Moose to the kennel just before the *Victoria* sailed. He said you would want to hear all about them, particularly Navarre. They are well, but they have missed you; though Dan Kelly and the others go to see them often and take them out for exercise."

Paul never failed to be as much with René Haas and Victor Chastaigne as possible; and often when they had an hour or so free they came to the château for dinner and to visit the patients there.

Late in October the cold weather commenced, with the first flurry of snow. "I dread the winter," Count de Barrau said, as he sat with Mrs. Barrau and Paul by a meager fire in one of the smaller rooms. They were saving fuel, and already food was becoming less plentiful. "I dread it for the army most of all, for I remember the suffering we went through." He turned to his grandson. "Paul, I am sorry to tell you that to-morrow Nero goes away. He is strong, and they have need of him. Even the poor beasts must do their share. And I think that Pierre will have to dispose of Jeanne's puppies. We will keep her, but we can no longer feed so many others. There are farmers whose sons are at the front, who could use such dogs to herd their sheep. If," he added sadly, "there are still those who can keep their flocks."

Paul could not speak. Hot tears came and he walked slowly to the window, where he stared out, unseeing, into the darkness. Sleet, wind blown, beat against the panes.

Jeanne's splendid pups to be sold or given to strangers who, perhaps, would not take care of them well. They might be cold or hungry, as Navarre had been when he slept on Sam Milton's grave; beaten as Navarre had been by Black Mart. What of old Pierre, whose son was gone, and who loved them?—of Julie, who was lonely for her boy, and loved them, too, for his sake? It just *couldn't* happen. It *shouldn't*.

Paul kissed his mother, and after a brief good-night to his grandfather crept up to bed to toss and turn restlessly for hours.

Justin—Nero—the puppies of Jeanne d'Arc. Did war take everything from people who couldn't help themselves?

He heard the moans of a sick soldier across the corridor and Marie's soothing voice. His mother's words, spoken so long ago in the North, came back to him. "Fighting isn't all glory, Paul. Don't forget that when you're thinking of shining helmets and waving banners." He'd say it wasn't all glory—it was everything *but*.

How long ago it seemed since he had come to the château, and had explored the dungeons with Pierre and Justin, and had peered into the black depths of the oubliette. Why, he had been just a *kid* then. Now—now—— But what could he do to save the shepherd dogs, who had known no other home, had done nothing but pleasant work, received nothing but kindness in all of their young lives? The poor Duponts to lose them, and poor Jeanne. There *must* be some way out.

And poor Nero, too, so strong and so gentle, with his glossy coat that Pierre had made shine like satin. He might be hitched to a gun carriage, with no caresses and no sugar from friends. Maybe blows.

Early the next morning Paul went down to the Dupont cottage. Nero, pawing impatiently in his stall, had been harnessed and blanketed; ready for a man who would call for him soon.

Pierre, heavy eyed, moved aimlessly about the kitchen; and Julie, trying to go through her daily tasks as usual, paused often to wipe her tears with her stiffly starched apron.

"You have heard—about Nero—Monsieur Paul?"

"Yes, Pierre; and my grandfather says that Jeanne's puppies must go also."

"It is hard, very hard," the old man replied in a lifeless tone. "But it is war—and it is for France; so we must not grieve. We will miss Nero. It will be difficult now to get our supplies from Tréville. The automobile has something wrong with its engine, and it needs new tires—all four—and we have no money for the repairs."

Paul, who had been sitting disconsolately drinking a glass of milk Julie had given him, with some freshly baked bread, suddenly pushed his chair away from the table and rose.

"Pierre," he exclaimed excitedly, "I've thought of something—about the dogs. I can train Jeanne and the others to sled work. You and I can build a sled; you know how to use tools, and I have pictures of

those we use in Alaska. Then I can do the errands for the château. We can't *carry* things from the village ourselves—supplies and food, and the things for the sick soldiers. But this way I could even do hauling for the neighbors, and if they would pay a little for it, the dogs could be fed easily."

Pierre looked bewildered, and shook his head dubiously. "If Monsieur the count is willing I will do my best. But for little dogs to work like draft horses—no, it is not easy to believe."

Paul did not wait to convince him, but dashed up to the château, where he found Count de Barrau sitting, as usual, in front of the fire, a newspaper lying on the floor beside him.

The old man listened attentively while the boy poured out his plan. The amused light in the count's eyes gave place to one of interest as Paul recounted in detail the use of dogs in the Far North.

"The mail teams carry a thousand pounds, maybe more, over a thousand miles; in relays of about three hundred miles. And I've seen four men hold them at the postoffice, they were so peppery. Could hardly wait to have the sacks unloaded. And fast! Why, in the Sweepstakes of 1910 they made the course of 408 miles in a little over seventy-four hours. And that counted the time for eating, sleeping, and accidents." He was quite breathless. "And they're so strong and willing—oh, Grandfather, if you'll only let me try—with Jeanne and her pups."

Helen Barrau came in and added her plea to her

son's. She reminded the count of Navarre's coming for assistance in the storm when Paul was lost. "They are so dependable, so faithful," she concluded.

Count de Barrau smiled gently. After all, the boy's heart was set on this thing; and he could not forget that his daughter-in-law and grandson had given up comfort and possibly safety to remain with him.

They could eat even less meat now, and more eggs and the vegetables that Marie had stored in the cellar; and of the fruits she had preserved during the summer. That would help feed the dogs. And he would have Georges go to the near-by estate owned by Monsieur Dupré, a rich manufacturer, and say that Paul would be prepared to serve as a carrier for him. And there were others.

"Yes, Paul, you may try it, and I hope it may prove as you wish. I know what these shepherds mean to you and Pierre."

The boy could hardly wait to get back to the cottage with the news. Before the day was over Pierre was busy with the sled. They would have to use iron instead of steel for the runners, and lash it with heavy whipcord instead of walrus sinew; but that wouldn't matter. Nothing mattered but the success of the venture.

There was seasoned lumber about the place and within ten days the sled was finished. It had not the trim graceful lines of the racing sleds, but it was roomy and stout, and Paul was well satisfied.

For hours each day the boy trained the dogs with

much care and patience. The younger ones seemed to consider the thing a new game, and were easy to manage; but Jeanne, whom Paul had naturally selected as a leader, clearly regarded her change of occupation with disfavor. She was accustomed to doing her own thinking, depending upon her own intelligence, and this obedience to such foolish orders as "Gee," "Haw," "Whoa," and "Mush," annoyed her. She was constantly on the alert to find something along the way to herd; and just as Paul expected her to turn a corner quickly, she was apt to be diverted by a stray pig or a lamb that she decided needed attention from her.

Paul talked the matter over seriously with Pierre. "Of course, in the North it would be an awful come-down to be taken out of the lead, and most dogs would be pretty mad about it; unless they were like Baldy of Nome. He'll work in any position. But I guess Jeanne don't know what an honor it is, so she won't feel hurt. Anyway, I'll have to try her in the wheel and put Napoleon, the smartest of the lot, in her place."

The change worked very well, and it was not long before Paul was driving over snowy fields and along the small lanes that skirted the estate. He did not wish to take the team on the main roads till he was sure of it. Then he would show Alsace how Alaska handled her transportation problems. It would make these Frenchmen sit up and take notice.

The Duponts were delighted with this new accom-

plishment of Jeanne's family; and their letters to Justin were filled with the wonders that his pets were doing.

Soon it would not be necessary for Pierre to carry loads of supplies on his bent back, nor for Julie to limit her demands for household needs to his waning strength.

The first time Paul drove to Tréville she said, "We must have another kettle for soup, a very big one; these sick soldiers drink much good rich broth. And flour and onions, all you can bring. You will not forget—you and your little cart horses?"

Count de Barrau came out on the terrace to watch the start. He was surprised to note how still the restless pups stood till Paul, perched on the runners at the back of the sled, cried, "Mush!" And then to see the five dogs dash off at a speed he would not have believed possible.

He went back into the library, leaning on his daughter-in-law's arm. Dropping into his favorite armchair he looked long at the portrait of Paul's father, painted when he was fifteen. The old man's sad face brightened. "My dear Hélène, we have a fine lad—so full of energy, so eager to be of service. He is like Gaston."

Helen Barrau regarded the picture tenderly. Yes, Paul had the same flashing eyes, the firm mouth, the olive skin and straight slim figure. She pressed the count's hand. "A true De Barrau," she said softly, "and I too am proud of that."

When Paul returned from the village he was much elated at the stir his team had occasioned. The jingling bells he had tied on Napoleon's collar, and his own orders shouted to the leader, had been heard distinctly, and the people came to their windows and doors to see what was happening; remaining to stare in bewilderment at the sight.

"I don't believe if I'd been driving elephants or tigers," he confided to his mother, "that the town would 've been more excited. All the kids were chasing after me, yelling and laughing like they'd bust their sides. By the time I'd parked in front of the shop I guess the whole of Tréville was standing round us, all talking at once. They couldn't get over it. And when the shopkeeper loaded the flour and the kettle and the big pile of stuff Marie and Julie wanted into the sled, they just gasped at what was being done to '*les pauvres petites chiens*.' But when they saw those 'poor little dogs' streak out of the village like they were in a Sweepstakes, well, they shook their heads, and I could hear them say, 'It is strange, but it is American,' as if that explained everything queer. I sure gave them something to chew over. Gosh, I wish the Wonder Workers had been there. They'd have got a kick over it. And Navarre and Hope and Hobo! Napoleon's all right, but Navarre could run circles round him and beat him out."

After a few days, when he found that he had the team under perfect control, Paul suggested to his

grandfather that he ride over with him to see General Chastaigne.

"You can't use the car, and Nero's gone, and I can get you there in no time," Paul urged.

Count de Barrau smiled. What a figure he would make, going to visit the general in that manner! He who all his life had preserved the dignity of a De Barrau; who had, in his day, possessed beautiful carriages and fine horses; and then a car that, even now, decrepit as it was, bore the mark of a good make.

But, as Paul pointed out, the car could no longer be used, and there were no horses in the stable—even Nero was gone. And he did so want to show what dogs did in his beloved Alaska. In his eagerness he dropped into English. "Everybody does it there, and I've seen big men like Stefansson, George Hubert Wilkins, Mayor Lomen, and Governor Strong tickled to death if racing drivers asked them to go behind their crack teams."

"Tickled to death?" The count was puzzled.

"I mean *très honoré*," the boy amended hastily. "Please do try it just once, and if you don't like it I'll never ask you again."

After all, why not? The war had made adaptability to conditions more desirable than dignity. Then, too, the pleading eyes, the eyes of his Gaston—and the voice.

"Yes, I will go with you. We will give General

Chastaigne a new sensation—may even,” he added laughing, “revolutionize the Army of the Vosges.”

Helen Barrau covered the count warmly and cautioned her son. “Not too fast. This is no High School race, and if your grandfather meets with any mishap it will prejudice him against this method of travel.” She nodded gayly. “*Bon voyage*, and remember Alaska’s reputation is at stake.”

The sensation they created as they entered camp was all that Paul had anticipated. Shouts, laughter, and cheers from the soldiers. And when they drew up in front of the general’s quarters and he came out to greet them the boy was quite satisfied that the commandant was properly impressed.

Count de Barrau, stiff but uncomplaining, was helped to his feet. He shook hands with his friend. “My carriage,” he waved toward the sled, “was more comfortable than I expected; and my horses and coachman most satisfactory.”

While the count visited, Paul talked with many of the men who gathered about him, telling again of all that the dogs do in the North. Then he went in search of René Haas and Victor Chastaigne.

René naturally was interested in the experiment; but after a few moments he lapsed into a thoughtful silence and walked away. Victor, with French enthusiasm, examined the dogs, the harness, and the sled carefully. “And what do you call this droll machine?” he asked in English.

“A Pupmobile.”

The young captain was much diverted. "If you will give me a ride in your Pupmobile, *mon ami*, I will take you up in my plane some day."

"Get in now," Paul replied. "My grandfather won't be ready to leave for half an hour."

Captain Chastaigne climbed in, and they dashed off toward the mountains, which rose abruptly just beyond the camp. When they returned Paul had made another convert to the new "machine," as Victor had termed it.

It was the first of almost daily trips to headquarters; for there were many errands to be done in connection with the sick soldiers at the château. Then, too, Paul was kept busy otherwise, for the patronage of the neighbors had increased. Many of them, being left without servants, were glad to accept the boy's service in the matter of small commissions in Tréville. Those who had no dogs themselves saved bones and scraps for Paul's, so that there was now no worry about their food.

The winter passed, with more strain and more hardships for all of France. Success and failure for the army, victories and defeats, and still there was no hope of peace.

In early spring the snow melted and the roads were deep with slush and mud which gave place, shortly, to the heavy dust of another hot summer.

Since the dogs had become indispensable as carriers, Paul and Pierre made a little cart, which they drew with almost as much ease as they had the discarded sled.

Justin, who had been slightly gassed, was home on leave, and one of Paul's chief pleasures was to take the dogs, one at a time, into his room and recount their achievements.

"They're helping in lots of ways, and I guess if we had enough of them they'd be as important as cavalry. But nobody around here knows what they could do, if they had a chance, except René Haas, and he's only a lieutenant and hasn't any say."

Justin smiled happily. "I am grateful to you, Monsieur Paul, for finding this way to keep them. I wept, in the trenches, after I heard from my mother that they were to be sold—my little ones that I had raised and loved."

Letters from Paul to the Wonder Workers became infrequent. Realizing that the mails were censored, he made them brief and vague. He did, however, tell them of his team, and their replies were consoling. One member of the order wrote each time a steamer left Nome, and Paul could see that the boys were deeply impressed by the experiences through which he was passing.

"Sounds a lot better on paper," he said to his mother. "They don't know the terrible things we see and hear. Gosh, sometimes I just have to grit my teeth to keep from blubbering right out loud."

Dan Kelly's last letter told him that Navarre, Hope, and Hobo were in the Kougarok with Moose, and would be there till the end of July. "They sure did miss you something fierce. Hollered their heads

off after you left. Hope's got a litter of the peachiest pups he ever saw, Ted Wilson says. He stopped at the claim on his way to the Hot Springs for his vacation. They're regular fuzzy-wuzzies, and he and Moose named them after the French generals who had names they could pronounce. Lucky there were only three to give them to."

Moose Jones's correspondence was limited almost entirely to postcards on which he scrawled such messages as "Atta boy! Hurry up an' lick them wienie-worsts."

In an envelope, however, he had sent some snapshots taken by Ted: one of Navarre, one of Hobo, and one of Hope and her puppies. "Mother and children doin' well. Wisht I cud sick 'em onto the Heinies. Respects to your ma. Same t' you from your friend Moose."

It made Paul so homesick he could not eat his dinner, and he went down to the Dupont cottage to show Justin the pictures.

They all agreed there that the war couldn't last forever, and then he'd go back to Alaska. Maybe Justin would go too. And with the newcomers waiting for him he'd have a regular Sweepstakes kennel. It was cheerful to dwell on that thought, in the midst of the many troubles that were steadily growing worse.

About the end of June Paul was much disturbed to learn that René Haas was no longer in camp. The orderly of whom he inquired could give him no

definite information. The lieutenant had left but a day or so ago, for what place he could not say. No, there had been no message for Monsieur Paul.

In a conversation with the general later the boy mentioned his disappointment in not finding his friend. He did not dare ask of René's movements. He supposed that transfers of officers were made often. But there was a twinkle in the general's kind eyes as he answered, "Yes, your friend is away on a secret mission. He will return before long, and you will be more happy than ever to see him. I am certain of that."

The days were dreary and full of anxiety at the château. More wounded men were brought in to replace those who had recovered—or had died. Often the news from the various fronts was discouraging, and Paul's grandfather would sit for hours with his head bent and his face white with despair. How would it end? Nothing seemed sure now; not even the final victory for which all France prayed and fought.

Victor Chastaigne was making constant flights over the enemy lines, and having many narrow escapes. Once a broken wing had forced him down within German territory, and he had been saved at a terrible risk by an American ace of the Lafayette Escadrille, who had seen his plight.

War was getting pretty close, Paul reflected, when your best friends are almost killed. He was glad it was an American who had saved him. Maybe soon America would come over, and then he knew the

thing would end, and end right. In the meanwhile it was up to him to do what little came his way. It wasn't much, of course. He was only a boy, and the hero jobs all seemed to be held down by men. But it was something to be able to go for medicines and bandages and to relieve his mother and poor old Pierre and Julie of a few cares.

More than six weeks had passed since René Haas's disappearance, and still not a word had been said by the general or Victor. "I've hinted and hinted," Paul told his grandfather, "and they never speak of him."

Late one afternoon Count de Barrau asked Paul if he would take a message to General Chastaigne for him. "It is about a young officer here, and is very urgent. You are not too tired?" The count knew that he had been working hard all day.

"No, sir, and I'd like the walk through the woods. I'm ready now."

In spite of what he had said, the boy *was* tired; and worse than that, he was sad and discouraged. The struggle seemed so endless, and there was so much suffering. Why, only that morning—but he wouldn't think of such things. You just couldn't, and keep going.

It was nearly dusk, and he had almost reached the camp. Turning around a clump of trees, he saw a tall, broad-shouldered figure just ahead. It looked like Sergeant Lejeune; he'd have company the rest of the way.

Paul called several times, and the figure stopped

and faced him. The man was not in uniform—that was queer. Maybe he——

At the sound of the boy's voice a great gray form sprang upon him from a thicket beside the road. It was Navarre! But it couldn't be—it just *couldn't*! And the man coming quickly toward him—Moose Jones! But that couldn't be, either. Maybe he'd gone crazy, like some of the poor sick soldiers, when they thought they saw their wives or their mothers, and it was only old Marie. Yes, that was it: he was crazy, all right. Seeing and hearing things that weren't there at all. Yet the man had hold of both his hands in a crushing grip, and the dog was licking his face and barking with joy.

"Moose, Navarre!" Paul gasped. Then he had an empty, all-gone feeling inside. Like he was going to topple over, or maybe cry, or laugh. Moose steadied him by the arm and led him to a green bank near, the dog at their heels.

"Yes, Son, it's us—not ghosts, like I reckon you thought we was."

"But how—why——" The boy was trembling with excitement.

"You jest set still a spell till you ketch your breath, an' I'll hit the high spots o' the yarn an' spill the rest later."

Navarre's head was in Paul's lap, and he clung to Moose Jones's big comforting hand. "Quick—I can't wait."

"You see, kid, it was this way. When Renny Haas

seen how things was goin' hereabouts last winter, or ruther how they wasn't goin', he done some thinkin'. There was tons an' tons o' grub an' clothes an' ammunition that was stalled all over and couldn't be got t' the places they was intended for."

Paul nodded. "That's so."

"Horses an' mules ain't much good in deep snow; you reckoner how it was in Nome. Cut theirselves t' pieces strugglin' in it."

"Yes."

"Well, he knowed what dogs cud do—none better. An' jest 'bout the time he was plannin' t' tell it t' the big bugs you looms up one day with your bowwows, an' they seen it with their own eyes. Him an' the gen'ral spoke things over frequent, an' the gen'ral put it up t' the War Department. They, bein' pretty level-headed, I reckon, says, 'Go ahead. It's O. K. with us.' So Renny was sent t' Nome, an' two other fellers t' Canady an' a place called Labrydore. They was aimin' t' try all kinds o' dogs out."

"So that was René's secret mission that bothered me so."

"Secret? You bet it was. Tellygrams in code an' sich."

"Was Nome excited? And the Wonder Workers?" Paul demanded eagerly.

"I'll say they was. The hull town was up on its hing legs pawin' the air. By the time Renny got there the dogs was bought an' put in a big stable. *An' guarded*," Moose added impressively.

"Guarded?"

"Yep, there was people there that cottoned t' the Germans, an' they bragged that not one single Alaska dog 'd git t' France. We laid in tons o' dog salmon t' last 'em till they cud git here an' git used t' French cookin', an' sleds, an' harness, an' parkas, an' other stuff that was needed. An' some of us fellers jest hollered our heads off fer a chanct t' come along too."

"How did you get in on it, Moose?"

"We'd made a fair showin' in the Kougarok, even if minin' is all shot t' pieces by the war, so I was in town fer a while. Renny hed t' hev help, so he asked me an' Archie Cameron an' Scotty Allan t' take the job. I says t' myself, 'Moose,' I says, 'I reckon this is the time t' jine the army an' see the world; and Navarre sure 'd want t' help Paul out; an' the quicker we git there an' clean up this here mess, the better,' I says."

"That was great. Then what happened?"

"Well, the day we left was one o' the wildest Nome ever seen. The ship was lyin' out about two mile, an' we hed t' take them purps on a big lighter from the beach by Sesnon's warehouse. Meant we hed t' march 'em the length o' Front Street. Folks lined up like it was a Sweepstakes er a circus parade in the States. Most of 'em cheered, an' a few of 'em hissed; but all of 'em got a kick outen it, one way er t'other."

"I should say so!"

"Renny Haas, spick an' span in his uniform o' the Blue Devils, marched at the head, alongside o' Na-

varre; an' behind 'em come one hundred an' six other dogs, hitched to a three-hundred-an'-fifty-foot towline, prancin' like they was sure they was in fer a good scrap an' cud hardly wait fer it t' be pulled off. They was all dolled up with red, white, an' blue on their collars; an', countin' Navarre, there was twenty-eight sons an' grandsons o' Baldy o' Nome in the bunch. Say, kid, some service flag old Baldy kin hang up in front o' his kennel. It was a classy percession, I'll tell the world."

"Oh, Moose, I wish I'd seen it."

"A darned good show, ef I say it as shouldn't; bein' one of 'em. A woman whose folks was killed in Belgium by a bomb from a plane jest kneeled right down in the street with the tears runnin' down her cheeks, when we stopped fer a minute, an' put her arms round Navarre's neck. She was sobbin' so she cud hardly speak; but she says, 'Fight fer us, Navarre, fight fer us.' An' that son of a gun wagged his tail an' promised her, well 's he knowed how, thet he would. Well, we got on the lighter, an' jest afore the tug pulled us out I'll be doggoned ef True Blue, who was amblin' round town loose, didn't dash up the gangplank t' enlist. He made a turrible row 'bout bein' put off, an' tried t' swim out like Navarre done when you left. He's so old that he's gray headed, an' Renny patted him an' said, 'You're game, an' I'd like t' take you; but you're over the age limit, so you'll hev t' go ashore.' I'll tell you 'bout the trip t' Seattle an' acrost Canady some other time. We hed a private car fer

the dogs; mebbe it was a box car, but anyways it was private. An' when we got t' Quebec we went on a boat that was waitin' fer us, an' them others from the Northwest an' Labrydore." Moose chuckled. "Gosh, kid, *what* do you s'pose that boat was named? The *Pomeranian*! The *Pomeranian* t' take a load o' huskies t' war. Kin you beat it?"

Paul was amused. "I hope none of them knew it."

"You bet they didn't, er there would 'a' been a mutiny. We hed troubles enough keepin' 'em quiet ez it was; some not bein' good sailors. With them subs a-chasin' all over the Atlantic, we hed t' keep the lights out; an' us fellers took turns patrolin' between the rows o' kennels, tellin' them pups the Germans 'ud git 'em ef they didn't watch out. Thet's 'bout all. They was all alive an' well t' answer the roll call when we got here only this mornin'.

"Scotty went back t' Alaska, but me an' Archie Cameron come along ez valleys t' the dogs. You see, I'm pickin' up this lingo fast, Paul. So we're here t' stay till the hull shebang's over."

"Oh, Moose, I can hardly believe it. It's all so wonderful."

Moose rose. "Better come on over an' see Renny an' some o' your old dog friends."

"How about Hope and Hobo and *your* team? I was so rattled I forgot to ask."

"Hobo an' my Dick an' Tom's waitin' t' shake paws with you right now in camp. Hope's fam'ly was too young fer her t' leave. 'Sides, this ain't no

place fer a lady; so I left her in the Allan an' Darling kennel."

Paul gravely turned to Navarre and stood at attention; but his eyes were shining, and there was a happy smile on his lips.

"Navarre of the North, Commander in Chief of the Sled Dog Division of the French Army of the Vosges, I salute you."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

DECORATED FOR HEROISM

PAUL's meeting with Hobo, Dick, Tom, and the rest of the Nome "Foreign Legion" was a joyous one for them all.

René Haas told the boy much that Moose had not known of the circumstances that had led to the establishment of this new branch of the service, and of the trip.

"It is not so very strange, when you think it over," René said. "They are employing carrier pigeons, and even white mice and canaries in the submarines to give warning of leaking gas, and all kinds of dogs in the Red Cross and as messengers; so why not for transportation duty, as well? They've proved themselves indispensable in Alaska; and I am counting on great things for them here."

Before long René's anticipations were more than fulfilled. And the dogs' human "buddies," the Blue Devils, were thoroughly convinced of their worth when they saw huge sled loads of provisions, clothing, barbed and telephone wire, and general equipment hauled to distant points in an incredibly short time. And that, too, after repeated failures to accomplish the same things with other means. The jeers of the soldiers were changed to cheers over feats that they had believed impossible.

Soon the papers all over France and England had admiring comments on their "Little Allies of the North," and Paul cut articles and pictures from illustrated magazines to send to the Workers, in which Navarre and the dogs they knew were mentioned especially. Lieutenant Haas said that the Nome dogs were the ones with a "college education" as they had been bred for this particular work and trained by racing drivers. This Paul repeated with much satisfaction in a letter to Gene Terry:

Gee [he had written], but war is fierce. Men all shot to pieces brought in every day, and the poor people around the château having such tough luck it would make you sick. Bombs landing on their houses and barns—— But what's the use? You'd have to *see* it to know how awful it is.

Moose Jones told a soldier who speaks English about me calling Navarre the commander in chief, and he told the men; and now when Navarre goes by they all salute him, if there aren't any officers around. Of course they do it in fun, but they sort of mean it, too; for they sure are

keen on the pups. Handle them like they'd been brought up in a dogs' country. I don't wonder, though, for the pups are as full of pep as if they were headed for a white whale party, instead of the firing line, with guns roaring to beat the band, and the darnedest messes of all kinds. I'll bet even Tim Neal's Prince would snap into it and forget his cookies.

I can't tell you all I want to, because our letters get the once-over; but wait till I'm back, and believe me I'll give you and the rest an earful.

One day, when Paul was in the camp kennels with Moose Jones and Archie Cameron, Captain Chastaigne came in. "Paul, can you take me out with your team? Lieutenant Haas is waiting for important orders, and I'd like to go into the mountains to find a possible landing field. A couple of soldiers stationed in a lookout station say that near them is a small plateau, free of trees. I want to examine this—I've been locating a number in the neighborhood; might find them convenient in an emergency. My plane is being repaired now, and I'd like a real run with the dogs. You might convert me from flying to mushing."

Paul was delighted. "Moose, will you send word to my mother so she won't worry if I'm late?"

"Sure, Son; Hop right along. I'll go myself—ain't got a thing t' do. Been valleyin' the dogs all mornin'. Even cut their toe nails so 's they 'd be ready when Renny needs 'em. 'Sides I'd like t' polly-voo with your grandpa. I'm gittin' the deep dope fine an' want to show off right bad."

Paul, when he went to tell René Haas of the plan, said to him wistfully, "I suppose you're taking Navarre when your orders come to go out. I don't see him often, and if you weren't leaving till I get back I thought maybe you'd——"

He hesitated; and René, seeing the longing in his face, replied quickly, "You may take him, if you wish. But leave me your Napoleon in case I do have to go before you return. It will make no real difference, for all of Baldy's sons and grandsons are leaders. He certainly," he added smilingly, "sent a large and distinguished family to help us out over here."

Paul could hardly wait to hook up Navarre; and in a few moments the well broken pups of Jeanne d'Arc were responding to his leadership as if they had never known another's.

"It's because he's so friendly," the boy explained to Captain Chastaigne, who settled himself comfortably in the sled. "He never in his life scrapped with a dog for the fun of it, except the Yellow Peril. And that wasn't *really* for fun: it was because the Peril insulted him, so he had to."

The captain laughed. "Well, in a country where dueling over insults dies hard, that is nothing against him."

"Sometimes," Paul continued, "when I drove him as a loose leader, he had to nip Hobo for loafing; but after the first time Hobo didn't get sore. He was smart enough to know it was coming to him."

It was a beautiful, clear day; and the trail led up

the rugged mountain side under great evergreens where the sunshine filtered through branches thickly powdered with snow.

The air was bracing, but not too cold for enjoyment; and Paul listened to the captain's accounts of his recent flights with deep interest.

It must be wonderful to do things like that for your country. Speed away from pursuers, bring down enemy planes. It was tough for a guy who was as tall and as strong as most of the French soldiers, and pretty near as old as some of them, to be in the midst of all this big stuff and not be able to do anything better 'n carrying flour or milk for some poor old woman. Tough was right!

The captain had been raised in this part of Alsace and knew it thoroughly. "There's a short route that would cut off nearly seven miles of the seventeen; but it skirts some deep gorges and is dangerous. Do you think your dogs could make it? I'd like to be back in camp as early as possible, but we must take no chances."

"They can make it—don't worry about that," Paul answered with pride. "Navarre led over the Golden Gate Divide in the Sawtooth Range, in Alaska; and if there's anything worse than that here you'll have to show me."

They had covered more than half the distance before they came to the spot where the route branched; the shorter one winding along the almost perpendicular face of a cliff.

Again Captain Chastaigne spoke to Paul. "Only the most experienced mountaineers try this, though the worst of it lasts but a little while. You really think——?" He glanced at the team, his eyes resting doubtfully on Navarre, who stood still, waiting for the next order.

"I'm sure of him."

"All right, then, go ahead. But it takes courage for a mere flyer, with the whole sky for a trail, to be so close to a wall of rock on one side and a bottomless pit on the other."

Never once did Paul's faith in Navarre's ability flag. The dog picked his way with extreme care; stopping now and then to rest, but never showing any sign of uncertainty or nervousness, and the others responded unhesitatingly.

The boy did not hurry them too much, for he did not wish to make a mistake that would count against their use in Victor's opinion. But their ascent was rapid where space permitted, which made up for the slower travel in the more difficult stretches.

Well within three hours they had reached the lookout cabin, where they found Sergeant Patray and Émile Dufour, who had suggested the captain's visit. They went with them to a small clearing, a few hundred yards away, which Victor approved as an emergency landing place.

The men were astonished at the accomplishment of the team. "It is only an Alpine Chasseur who would dare come that way," one of them said. "But

for a lad and little dogs——” He gave a gesture of bewilderment.

After the simple food their hosts could offer, Captain Chastaigne was ready to return.

“Shall we go back the same way?” Paul asked eagerly. “I’d like to see how much better time we’d make on the down grade.”

The captain agreed. “I am beginning to enjoy the thrill of the danger. Aviation is tame compared to this. In flying one depends upon one’s own head and hand and the accuracy of machinery. But to know that only the intelligence and sure-footedness of dogs lie between you and a fatal crash—ah, that is excitement!”

The journey home was a fast one, and when they reached camp Paul went with Victor to the general’s quarters.

The captain’s description of the trip amused his uncle. “I fear,” he had concluded, “for the reputation of the Flying Service. It will be challenged by the Sled-dog Division.”

General Chastaigne nodded. “It is to Lieutenant Haas that we owe this valuable addition. I, too, have felt a responsibility in the matter, for I recommended his suggestion as to the employment of dogs to the War Department.” He turned to Paul. “The lieutenant has been sent out on a detail that may cover several days, and he has taken practically all of the dogs—many, many teams. You may, if you wish, keep Navarre until he returns. A reward,” he smiled kindly, “for taking Victor on his mission.”

Paul went to the château immediately, happy to have Navarre with him again if only for a short time. His mother and Count de Barrau were much entertained by his adventure; and Pierre and Julie shared his enthusiasm. "That will be a fine thing for our son to read in my next letter," Julie remarked. "His shepherd dogs doing what even Nero with all of his strength could not have done. He will be proud, our Justin!"

Each day Paul was in camp, but at the end of a week René had not returned.

"We have sent orders," the general had said, "for him to stay and do all that is necessary there. They are without other means of transportation for their supplies, and the snow is deep and soft in that neighborhood."

Late one afternoon Paul heard a motor come up the driveway and stop at the front door. Presently Georges ushered General Chastaigne into the library, where Paul was seated at the desk writing the *Wonder Workers*. His grandfather was dozing before a small fire in the grate, and Mrs. Barrau was with her patients.

It had been a sad day. One of the young officers had died, and Paul was feeling the weight of the tragedies about him. He tried to make his letter cheerful, but paused to think what he could say that was not depressing. Gosh, he wished he might tell the guys that they were licking the Germans, but they weren't. Not yet.

He rose as the general came in hurriedly and was greeted by the count. Even in the dim light that filtered through the windows Paul could see that General Chastaigne's face was white and drawn. He dropped heavily into a chair as Count de Barrau asked anxiously, "Something new has happened to disturb you?"

It was a moment before the general could answer. "Yes," he replied brokenly, "something terrible. Sergeant Patray, at the cabin where my nephew and Paul went the other day, has telephoned that Victor's plane was shot down near them and he is lying in their hut seriously, perhaps fatally, injured. He is unconscious now from loss of blood. I came," he went on, hastily, "to talk to Paul about the road to the place. There has been no snow since they went over it, and I knew he could give me an idea of how difficult it would be to send help. Lieutenant Haas is still away, so we have no dogs; nor any men who know that trail well." Despair shone from his eyes as he turned to Paul. "Do you believe it would be possible for a mule or a horse to get there with a litter and bring him back?"

The boy wished that he might say yes. He realized how the general was suffering; but he must tell the truth, hard as it was.

"No, sir, I don't think the thing could be done. The crust of the snow was so thin that even the dogs broke through it sometimes. Horses or mules would sink to their shoulders in the drifts, and one wrong

step——” He just couldn’t go on. It was fierce. Victor wounded, maybe dying, when the doctors at the hospital might be able to save him if only he could be brought to them.

“You are exhausted,” the count said to his guest. “You must have something to eat.”

“I can eat nothing. Not while Victor is——”

“But at least some hot soup. I will have Georges bring it here, and tell Hélène to come to us. We may think of a way.” He rang the bell and gave the order to Georges, who returned to say that Madame de Barrau would be there shortly, and that he would serve supper at once.

“A way! A way!” The words hammered themselves into Paul Barrau’s brain. Yes, there *was* a way—only one—and he’d take it. And mighty darned quick, too, before anyone could interfere with him.

He looked uneasily at the two men before the fire. The general had covered his eyes with a shaking hand while the count sat beside him, silently sympathetic.

Paul, quite forgotten by them for the moment, went quietly back to the desk. He took the sheet of paper on which he had been writing to the boys and drew a line through the few sentences that were on it. In a clear space below he scribbled hastily:

DEAR MOTHER AND GRANDFATHER:

I’ve gone for Captain Chastaigne with the dogs. When you read this it will be too late to stop me. I’ll telephone when I get to the station. Love and please don’t worry.

PAUL.

He folded the note and slipped from the room. Navarre, who had been lying at his feet, was at his heels noiselessly. Paul found Georges in the dining room. "Give this to my mother or to Count de Barrau in twenty minutes. *Not one second before.* Do you understand?"

Georges, somewhat puzzled, repeated, "In twenty minutes. Not one second before. Yes, Monsieur Paul, it shall be as you wish."

The boy went to a closet off the hall, where he found the sleeping bag and a parka that Moose had brought him as a gift and an extra rug. He snatched two pillows from a couch in passing and hurried to the stable. Each harness was hung on a separate peg, as in the racing kennels in Nome; and in little more than five minutes the dogs were ready, with Navarre in the lead.

Pierre Dupont, standing in front of his cottage, and accustomed to seeing Paul go out on errands at all hours, waved his hand and called cheerily, "*Bon voyage.*"

"*Voyage* is right," Paul murmured, returning the greeting. "And you bet your life we'll do our best to make it *bon.*"

After crossing the drawbridge of the moat, he struck out over an open field. He would avoid the main road for fear of being followed. The general and the count might regard his plan as hazardous, and useless, as well. And the general's car might be sent after him. He grinned. Well, a heavy car would have

a hot time on these fields where the surface was only able to bear his team and the light sled. Yes, he'd given them the slip, all right.

They'd be reading his note by now. He was sorry for his mother and his grandfather; of course, they'd fret. But they needn't, if they could only realize what the Alaska dogs can do. His mother might, at that; but then mothers are always soft about a guy. It was only ten miles if he took the short cut, and not on more than a mile of that was there any real danger. Besides, Navarre and the others had just gone over it. A regular cinch!

He gave the camp a wide berth, and it was not long before they began the ascent of the nearest spur. He'd better go as fast as he could on the climb; coming down there'd be no strain; the hardest part would be to keep the brakes holding, and to curb the impatience of the dogs.

Every minute counted. "Victor unconscious—weak from loss of blood." The general's words haunted him. This splendid ace, one of the greatest in France, maybe dying for lack of care. But some of the men brought to the château were almost dead, and they got well. Victor should have his chance; and he, Paul, Victor's friend, would be the one to give it to him.

"Beat it, Navarre! Step on the gas, babies!"

Navarre needed no urging. The air was sharp, and the way was smooth, which made running a pleasure.

They were obliged to go slower when the grade became steep, and Paul stepped off the runners to

push. The big racing drivers all helped their dogs when the going was tough. And what records these men had made! They came to him as an inspiration.

Leonard Seppala had succeeded when he carried Bobby Brown, mangled and suffering, to Candle, across the icy divides of the Arctic. And Scotty Allan had driven Baldy of Nome to victory when the dog had been reported "down and out" at Timber. But Baldy just wouldn't stay "down and out," and had won that Sweepstakes on sheer pluck. And Navarre was Baldy's grandson.

It was great to *know* that your dogs would stand by you. Jeanne d'Arc's pups came of generations of shepherd dogs that had faithfully guarded their flocks, and René Haas had said long ago in the Kougarok that "blood will tell." Well, it was going to tell in this case; and if Navarre could live up to Baldy's blood, surely he, Paul, could live up to that of the Paul de Barrau, who had fought so valiantly for Henry of Navarre. Of course, he wasn't fighting on a horse in a suit of armor, with a lance and all the trimmings; but just the same he was fighting—for the life of the young captain who meant so much to General Chastaigne and to all of France. And to him, too; for he had learned to love Victor as much as he admired him.

The twilight deepened into dusk, then darkness. But shortly a moon came out, though it was often covered by clouds that scudded before a rising wind. You never could tell what would happen in these

mountains. Storms came suddenly and passed quickly. There had been one earlier. They were not like the blizzards of the North, which sometimes lasted a week. Perhaps these clouds didn't mean anything. But making speed while the speeding was good was sound dog dope.

"Hit 'er up, Navarre. That's the ticket," as the leader broke into a faster lope.

The trees cast wavering shadows in the moonlight. They looked like huge monsters ready to spring; like men moving stealthily across the snow from thicket to thicket. Like Germans creeping through the forest on some sinister errand. That was all the bunk, though. What would enemies be doing here? They were massed far away across the border; and any scouting would be done with planes. It was pretty dumb to let yourself imagine such stuff; to get scared stiff over nothing.

At last they reached the place where the short cut led away from the main trail, and Navarre unhesitatingly chose the one he had taken before. When they came to the deep gorge the moon was shining; and though they had to go very slowly, they met with no mishap.

The boy gave a sigh of relief when they were once more on safer ground.

"Nearly at the top; take it easy, Navarre. Get your breath for one more tug. Now for the finish. Mush!"

In a few moments they drew up in front of the

cabin. Paul did not wait for an answer to his knock, but pushed open the door.

Sergeant Patray was sitting beside a cot on which Captain Chastaigne lay motionless. He rose at Paul's entrance, amazement in his expression.

"You!" he gasped. "You!"

The boy interrupted him eagerly, pointing to Victor, "He is alive?"

"Yes, but that is about all," the man said softly. He glanced about the bare room. "We had so little—just a stimulant, and he could not take even that."

"Will you please telephone to headquarters that I'm here and am leaving at once? It will help them a lot to know that."

"The telephone line was broken late this afternoon. Probably a tree blew across it in a high wind we had for an hour or more. It happens often. Dufour went out to find the break while I remained with the captain. There has been nothing I could do."

Paul, with a sinking heart, stood looking down at Victor. His face was gashed badly, and both arms had been rudely bandaged by the men. His eyes were closed, and his breathing hardly perceptible.

Silently Paul went out to water the dogs. When he returned the sergeant had placed hot coffee on the table, with bread and cold meat.

"I fear Captain Chastaigne is hurt internally. He never spoke after we picked him up. He was trying to make a landing after his plane was shot through, but he crashed instead."

Paul drank the coffee but could not eat. He brought in the sleeping bag, and they managed to slip it over Victor's inert body. Then they carried him out to the sled, where Paul arranged the pillows and placed the extra robe so that it gave protection without shutting out the air. "Have you a rope?" he asked. Patray brought one, and they lashed it lightly across the sled. "Might keep him from falling out if we tipped," Paul explained briefly. "And if Dufour comes in, don't forget the message to the general. Thank you and good-bye."

Sergeant Patray saluted. "You are a brave boy, Monsieur Paul, and you carry a brave burden." He crossed himself. "May the saints protect you both."

Paul drove as rapidly as he dared; for soon the storm which had threatened burst upon them in all its fury. Instead of the moonlight for which he had hoped, there was only thickly falling snow driven by a piercing gale. Like a curtain, it shut even the wheel dogs from view; and the long motionless form, so close to him in the sled, was almost invisible.

By the time they came to the dreaded gorge again Paul's courage faltered. If only he had taken the longer route, which had no such difficulties as confronted him here! But he had wanted to save time. Time meant everything for Victor Chastaigne; and once past this dangerous spot they could make a quick dash through the more open country.

Navarre had paused, and Paul, groping uncertainly, crept up to him.

The dogs were pressing against the white wall that towered, misty and high, above them. The drifts hid the trail. One false step, and they would all plunge headlong into the abyss below.

The boy brushed the snow from his eyes, but he could see nothing clearly. If he could, he'd go ahead himself, feeling his way along the cliff, knowing that Navarre would follow. The soft snow was treacherous; twice he had to clutch the sled to save himself from a fall. It was no use. He was helpless.

"He has wolf senses and dog sense." *That* was what Sam Milton had believed of Navarre in the old days in Teller. Well, that was what he, Paul Barrau, believed of him now. He'd trust his leader; trust him to the end.

"Navarre," he whispered, "we didn't come from Alaska to Alsace to be quitters, did we? You saved my life once, and now I'm asking you to save Victor's. You won't fail. I *know* you won't."

"Go," he shouted, "go!" Navarre heard his voice above the shrieking of the wind; and steadying himself to meet the force of the recurring gusts, picked his steps with the wariness of a cat stalking its prey. Each move was deliberate, each gain sure. Sometimes the sled veered slightly, and Paul righted it with one foot on the brake, the other on the ground, and his numb hands clutching the handlebars. Steering was his job, as guiding was Navarre's.

A little more and they'd make it. Then the bow of the sled struck a hidden rock; it swerved, and Paul

at the back felt himself slowly swinging out inch by inch over that yawning gulf of empty blackness.

The sled began to slide, and Jeanne's pups were losing their footing. For an instant the lives of all of them hung in the balance. A despairing cry broke from Paul's stiff lips. "Pull, Navarre, pull!"

The leader knew what had happened: he was being dragged back by the heavy weight behind him. The sinews in his shoulders, sinews like finely tempered steel wires, tightened. He dug his paws into the snow, braced himself, and sprang forward; strong and quick as one of his wolf forebears of the North. The others regained their hold, and gradually the sled swung back, square on the trail. A few hundred yards, and they were secure.

Paul's teeth were chattering, and he shook so violently that he could hardly move. Navarre had stopped again on the wider stretch at the end of the ledge, and the others stood quivering with excitement and fear.

The boy, remembering the terror of that night in the Valley of the Kruzgamapa, had brought a flashlight with him. He bent over Victor. There was no change in the white face; but it had not the rigid look of death that Paul Barrau had learned to know in those past awful months. Victor was still alive. They must hurry.

The dogs had thrown themselves down to rest. Paul spoke to them, and they rose, panting but ready.

He dared not delay, for there was that last fast run yet to be made.

The storm was nearly over; and through the flakes that were like a thin, fluttering veil Paul could distinguish the trunks of giant trees as they sped by them; underbrush through which Navarre found the trail unerringly, the lights of the camp far below; and at last the figure of a sentry in the bright moonlight that flooded the plains again.

Would he be challenged? He'd have to take that risk. The man might recognize the team. Or maybe General Chastaigne had given orders.

Dashing by, Paul heard the sentry's voice, "Pass, friend." The general *had* given orders. They were safe within the French lines.

It was after midnight, and the camp was quiet; but a gleam from the windows at headquarters shone steadily through the darkness.

Within Mrs. Barrau, the general, and the count sat tense and helpless. They had rung up the mountain station as soon as they had discovered Paul's absence, but there had been no answer. Frequent efforts later were unavailing. The line was down.

Hour after hour they had waited, listened, despaired; had noted the coming and going of the storm, had heard the sleet beating against the panes. Their first hope had died away. Seven hours—and no news!

Suddenly Mrs. Barrau jumped to her feet. "Bells! Bells! Don't you hear them?"

"I hear nothing," General Chastaigne said.

"Nothing," Count de Barrau repeated sadly.

"But I do—I do. I can't be mistaken. I've heard them too often in the North." She rushed to the door and flung it open; the two men followed doubtingly.

Down the deserted street came swift-moving shadows, silent and ghostly in the dimness. A longer, darker shadow behind them—the dogs, the sled, and Paul.

The team halted automatically. People were gathering—who were they? Paul's head was reeling; he couldn't think. Strange fancies came, vivid pictures that flashed through his mind to disappear instantly and give place to others. Like when you're drowning—he'd heard of that—Dan Kelly'd told him once. A wolf-dog lying on a white grave in far-away Nome; a dog with whip lashes that had brought blood but not fear; that had crumpled in a crimson pool across the line, a winner; that crept alone into the Arctic wastes for help; that stood on the *Defiance* with the waters of Bering Sea widening, widening. A dog who had come to fight for France. Yes, that was it. That's what he wanted to tell the general. And about a mailed fist with "Loyal unto Death" beneath it. Meant you'd fight for your country—or a friend—till you died. That was what he and Navarre and the pups of Jeanne d'Arc had been trying to do. Fight for the life of Victor Chastaigne in the storm—on the edge of that black. . . . But when you tell things to a general you have to do it right. You stand straight and salute. "I have the honor, sir, to report——" He couldn't

stand straight; there was something wrong with his knees; he swayed. He couldn't lift his hand to salute, either; it trembled so. That was all wrong. A soldier doesn't . . . Why, there was his mother, his grandfather, and Moose Jones. How did they—" . . . the honor, sir, to—" Then sobs shook his slender frame. He pointed vaguely toward the sled. "Victor's alive—he's there, and Navarre—"

Paul Barrau dropped at the feet of General Chastaigne, unconscious; his arms flung across his gallant leader.

A month had passed, and France, Alaska, all of the world had heard of the Sled-dog Division of the French Army of the Vosges and of its splendid achievements. To-day they were to be rewarded by a grateful nation.

René Haas had been made a captain for his valiant service—carrying ninety tons of ammunition by dog team to a beleaguered outpost and saving it.

Paul Barrau and his dogs had been cited in the dispatches of the day for heroism.

Everywhere flags fluttered in the brilliant winter sunshine. A band played the "Marseillaise" as the Alpine Chasseurs, those sturdy Blue Devils, marched to the open space in front of the general's headquarters.

Mrs. Barrau and the old count were there, and Moose Jones. Best of all, Victor Chastaigne, pale and still bandaged, but able to take his part in the

great ceremony, leaned smilingly on Paul's arm. General Chastaigne came toward them.

"Gee," Paul thought, "I'm in for it good and plenty. Moose warned me I'd get kissed on both cheeks, and I'll bet that's what he's going to do right now. Before all the soldiers, and Pierre and Julie, and Georges and Marie—everybody will see it." He nerved himself for the ordeal. It was over in a moment, and nobody had laughed. Well, that helped a lot; but he'd skip over it when he wrote to the Wonder Workers and Mollie Day, and told them about the big show.

The general thanked him publicly; he'd been doing it privately for the whole month since he'd come in with Victor.

René Haas was decorated. He sure deserved it; and he did look classy with the red and green ribbon with the bronze palm hanging on the breast of his uniform.

The boy moved closer to his mother and grandfather. The count's bent shoulders straightened, and there was fire in his faded eyes. It was an hour to have lived for—this! His withered hand found that of his daughter-in-law. "Hélène, your son and Gaston's—the last of the De Barraus—and worthy of your country and mine."

Paul heard the voice of Moose Jones, shaky and queer. "What did I tell you, kid, back there in the Kougarok—that this here dog o' yourn was gittin' the life-savin' habit so bad that nobody 'd ever be

able t' stop him. An' now he's done it agin with the hull French army backin' him up."

Paul nodded silently, his gaze fixed on the team that was just before him—the shepherds and Navarre.

General Chastaigne stepped forward, stooped, and then, through tears of pride and happiness, Paul Barrau saw on Navarre's collar the cockade of red, white, and blue; and beneath it, at his throat, the Cross of War of France.

THE END

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